



## Donor Spotlight

# Investing in People: The Thomases' Latest Gift Benefits the College and the Community

In 2011, ownership of the Kokomo Event Center transferred from Howard County to Ivy Tech Community College. In recognition of the value of providing its residents with greater access to higher education while continuing to make a community asset available, the county allowed Ivy Tech to receive the Event Center at no cost. It truly was a mutually beneficial arrangement that promised to serve both the College and the county well for decades to come.

Still, Ivy Tech faced a challenge: how would the College fund the interior renovations and furnishings of the new Kokomo Event & Conference Center? That's where Don and Louise Thomas come in. Longtime supporters of Ivy Tech, the Thomases had established a fund for the College to use based on its greatest needs. The College sought the Thomases' approval to work together to renovate the Event Center.

"When I got the call about the gift," says Don Thomas, "asking if I thought this would be a good thing to put the fund toward, I immediately said I thought it was a great fit. Kokomo is a great, welcoming community that I've been in since 1962. The community has to roll out its best effort to attract businesses, to be an atmosphere that attracts small business. If Louise and I can help showcase Kokomo and its strengths, then it's a perfect match."

The Thomases' generosity allowed Ivy Tech to purchase much-needed equipment and furnishings like a large dishwasher, stage lighting, a theater sound system, tables, banquet chairs, and lobby furniture. Altogether, the funding from the Thomases allocated toward the Event Center will be more than \$125,000.

Even though Ivy Tech has taken ownership of the building, the Event Center will maintain its central role in the community. It remains available for weddings, conferences, private parties, luncheons, home and garden shows, and health



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fairs, among others. The 40,000+ square-foot facility can accommodate groups as large as 1,000.

The gifts toward the Event Center are just the latest example of the Thomases' support of Ivy Tech. They began giving to the College in the 1980s, and Don has served on the Ivy Tech Foundation Board of Directors since 1996. In 2002 they also gave property that was matched in worth by Lilly Endowment, Inc. This degree of commitment led to the Thomases being named Ivy Tech's Benefactors of the Year in 2005.

Don Thomas says it's simply a matter of the family wanting to do the most possible good with their contributions.

"I don't know of a better place to invest in people's futures and developments than Ivy Tech," he says. "I am a beneficiary of people who encouraged and helped me in so many ways. I can relate to trying to get an education while still having to work and so I relate with what Ivy Tech is doing. I don't think there's a better return on investment than Ivy Tech. We're really investing in people."