



Strength of Sheridan A W A R D

This award honors a Chamber member business or organization that has a long and distinguished tenure in the community (20+ years); an organization that demonstrates consistent service, continually invests in the community and demonstrates sustained quality performance.

Many community events are held at Whitney Commons.

Whitney Benefits, Inc.

Sheridan area benefactor Edward A. Whitney willed his estate to establish Whitney Benefits, Inc., creating the first educational foundation in Wyoming. Per his will, the foundation was established in 1927, 10 years after his death.

According to his original trustees, Whitney spent three decades of his life planning his gift to the people of Sheridan County. He made extensive investigations in the East as to how trust funds were structured for education and repeatedly asked his three associates, later to become the trustees of his estate, for suggestions.

"My estate does not belong to me; I'm only its steward: it belongs to the people and I dare not be careless with it," Edward A. Whitney said.

In his last will and testament, Whitney directed the corporation to do three things:

1. Fund a community center in Sheridan. Whitney helped establish and fund the Sheridan County YMCA, built the original Sheridan Ice rink and built and maintains Whitney Commons Park.

2. Establish a college in Sheridan. Whitney donated the land Sheridan College sits on today and has donated more than \$85 million to help fund several of its projects, buildings and educational programs.

3. Create a student loan program for worthy and needy students. Since inception of the program in 1928, through June 30, 2018, the corporation had loaned 5,926 students approximately \$43,462,931. For the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2018, Whitney approved interest-free loans totaling just more than \$2,297,242 to 112 students. As of June 30, 2018, Whitney had in excess of \$12,696,229 in student loan monies loaned and/or committed to Sheridan and Johnson County students.

In addition to Whitney's three priorities, Whitney Benefits serves to improve Sheridan County in many other ways. Since 2004, Whitney Benefits has gifted the city of Sheridan in excess of 50 million gallons of stored Park Reservoir water yearly to assist in watering Sheridan's 13 parks, pathways and greenways. The foundation also purchased the area that is now Whitney Plaza to revitalize and re-purpose that area as an extension of downtown Sheridan. Whitney Plaza offers retail, office and residential property and has nearly 500 parking spaces for various community and business uses.

In 2014, Whitney Benefits committed to the largest gift in the history of Sheridan College in the amount of \$25.3 million. The commitment from Whitney Benefits to Sheridan College included the necessary \$1.3 million required to complete the \$8 million Mars Agriculture and Science Center renovation project, \$16 million to support the renovation and expansion of the fine and performing arts wing of the original Whitney Building, \$2 million to support infrastructure and parking improvements on the main campus and \$6 million for approximately half of the Tech Center renovation and expansion project.

Community members sing the foundation's praises: "Whitney Benefits has made college possible for generations in our area," one member said. "It goes without saying, Whitney Benefits has been hugely influential in the growth and expansion of people, businesses and the buildings we go to learn and work and play in Sheridan," another added.

Since 1927, when Whitney Benefits was created, 97 dedicated individuals have served on the Whitney Benefits Board of Trustees. Altogether, the Whitney trustees to date have dedicated more than 1,096 years of service supporting education and building our Sheridan community. ■