

# HIGH DESERT MUSEUM

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## High Desert Museum Receives Generous Endowment from Bonnie Lee and Oliver P. Steele III

### *Gift supports Museum's educational programs*

BEND, OR — The High Desert Museum is honored to announce the establishment of the Bonnie Lee and Oliver P. Steele III Education Endowment.

Bonnie and Oliver Steele moved to Central Oregon in 1992. The Steele family has generously invested approximately \$476,000 in support of hands-on educational programs at the High Desert Museum that will expand the learning for school children, educators, volunteers, staff and visitors in perpetuity.

The goal for the Museum's education programs is to create meaningful learning experiences through placed-based education, as well as wildlife and living history encounters. The Bonnie Lee and Oliver P. Steele III Education Endowment provides the opportunity to enhance these immersive education classes. The Museum's curator of education position, held by Carolyn Nesbitt, has been renamed the Bonnie Lee and Oliver P. Steele III curator of education in honor of Bonnie and Oliver.

"Oliver and Bonnie were passionate supporters of the Museum and its mission," said High Desert Museum Executive Director Dana Whitelaw, Ph.D. "Their amazing gift will carry on their legacy through experiential educational offerings benefitting children and adults throughout Central Oregon."

For many generations, the Steeles have served as educators, treasuring the "aha" moments and the joy that comes from the exchange of ideas and the growth of knowledge. In fact, Oliver, following in the footsteps of his mother, taught in a one-room schoolhouse in Kansas. He was a true innovator, holding multiple engineering patents. In her professional life, Bonnie was a successful real estate broker. Together they embraced lifelong learning. They traveled to all continents, exploring and discovering new places, while making friends worldwide.

Oliver and Bonnie deeply valued education, as they both often stated, "We believe that education is the only thing that cannot be taken from you. You can lose your job and your possessions, but an education will get them back."

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During their 68 years of marriage, Oliver and Bonnie were blessed with a loving family, including three children, their spouses and four grandchildren. Over the years, Oliver and Bonnie built the majority of homes they lived in, including in Sunriver and Bend. Oliver passed away in 2013 and Bonnie passed away last spring.

## ABOUT THE MUSEUM:

THE HIGH DESERT MUSEUM opened in 1982 and brings regional wildlife, culture, art and natural resources together to promote an understanding of the natural and cultural heritage of North America's high desert country. The Museum uses indoor and outdoor exhibits, wildlife in natural habitats, and living history demonstrations to help people discover and appreciate the high desert environment. The Museum is a 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization accredited by the American Alliance of Museums and is a Smithsonian Affiliate. [www.highdesertmuseum.org](http://www.highdesertmuseum.org)

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