
PENNWEST RECEIVES TRANSFORMATIONAL \$3.2 MILLION GIFT TO ENHANCE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION



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Pennsylvania Western University has received a \$3.2 million gift to enhance early childhood education at the Rutledge Institute for Early Childhood Education.

The transformational donation came from Karen and Tom Rutledge, who established the [Rutledge Institute for Early Childhood Education](#) at PennWest California in 2018 with a historic \$4.2 million gift. The latest contribution will significantly increase the institute's presence on campus, transforming Morgan Hall's building to support more educational activities, promote physical development, and expand the institute's program offerings. This

expansion will enable the institute to serve more children and broaden its impact on the local community.

Tom Rutledge, a 1977 graduate of California, and Karen Rutledge, who received an honorary doctorate from the university in 2022, have long championed early learning opportunities. The couple has supported students for years with several different internships and scholarship awards.

“Tom and Karen’s philanthropic support for the future of the Rutledge Institute has redefined at PennWest what is possible in learning, scholarship, and collaboration,” said Jon Anderson, president of PennWest. “This gift continues to empower our education majors to pursue their passions and provide the community with access to exceptional, innovative early childhood education – without financial barriers.”

Since its establishment, the Rutledge Institute has become a cornerstone of early childhood education at PennWest. The institute offers scholarships that provide free tuition, fees and housing for students pursuing degrees in early childhood education. These scholarships aim to enhance and strengthen the early childhood education workforce by training future professionals across various fields, from early care to specialized education.

Rutledge Scholars can earn early childhood credentials through a range of degree options, including an associate degree in early childhood education, a bachelor's degree in Grades PreK-4 with a teaching certification, or a master's degree in early childhood education

The Rutledge Institute for Early Childhood Education Center is a partnership between PennWest University and The Village, a state- and nationally accredited early childhood education center. The Rutledge Institute offers state-of-the-art early childhood education at no cost to qualifying families.

Currently, the institute educates 40 preschool-age students, preparing them for academic success through a curriculum that focuses on STREAM: science, technology, reading, engineering, arts, and math, as well as literacy in an emerging information age.

“This gift reflects Karen and Tom Rutledge’s ongoing commitment to providing world-class early learning opportunities to young children in southwestern Pennsylvania,” said Cherie Sears, director of the Rutledge Institute and president of The Village. “We are grateful that the Rutledge Institute will expand its positive impact on individuals and our community.”

For more information about the Power of PennWest,
visit www.pennwest.edu. For information on The Village,
visit <https://thevillagecares.org/>.