

## The Dorinda and James Van Burkleo Endowed Scholarship

*The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley | College of Education and P-16 Integration*

**RIO GRANDE VALLEY, TEXAS – OCT. 4, 2021** – Education, hard work, and community engagement are the three tenets by which James (Jimmy) and Dorinda Van Burkleo raised their children. Dorinda, a local teacher, and James, an automobile dealer, raised their four children to give back to the community in which they lived. To the Van Burkleo family, philanthropy went beyond financial support to include volunteer work and civic engagement. The legacy of philanthropy established by James and Dorinda now lives on through their family.

The Van Burkleo family, as a tribute to the legacy of their parents and grandparents, has gifted \$1 million to the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) to establish the Dorinda and James Van Burkleo Endowed Scholarship fund. Siblings Terry Van Burkleo, Dee Ann V. Payne, and Pat Van Burkleo, niece Brittany V. Flory, and nephew Brandon Van Burkleo, created the endowment in early 2021 to support students in the UTRGV Clinical Teaching Program. The family established the endowment in memory of Dorinda, who taught in public schools for almost 40 years, and Jimmy, who understood the significance of supporting higher education in the Rio Grande Valley (RGV).

Jimmy and Dorinda Van Burkleo were longtime residents of the RGV. Jimmy relocated to the region as a child, and Dorinda moved to the area after graduating from the University of North Texas in 1950. The pair called the RGV home for more than 58 years, and it is where they raised their four children, Terry, Dee Ann, Pat, and the late James “Bill” Van Burkleo, Jr.

“My parents appreciated that there was a university in the Rio Grande Valley where they could send their children,” said Dee Ann Payne. The three Van Burkleo sons began their college experience at UTRGV legacy institution Pan American University. It was cemented for them then, Dee Ann added, about the importance of having higher education opportunities close to home.

“The Valley was really great to my parents,” stated Pat Van Burkleo. “They met here, raised babies here and built successful careers here. My mother loved teaching, and my father built a successful business, and it is because of the opportunities the RGV afforded them that we wanted to build on my parents’ achievements in South Texas in their honor.”



Pictured: James “Jimmy” Van Burkleo

## James and Dorinda Van Burkleo

James (Jimmy) William Van Burkleo graduated from Mercedes High School in 1942. He was captain of the football team, lettered in football, basketball, and track, and was president of his senior class. The work ethic and charisma developed in high school helped Jimmy launch a successful career in the automobile industry. He became an auto dealer in 1963, when he purchased Glascoe Motors in McAllen, Texas. He changed the dealership name to Van Burkleo Motors in 1971, relocating to North 10th Street, where he would remain for 34 years.

Jimmy was well-respected in both the local business community and the automobile industry. He served on boards at the local, state, and national levels, and he received numerous prestigious awards and accolades throughout his career.

Dorinda Ward Van Burkleo had a love of teaching that was apparent throughout her 35-year career. She brought a passion and creativity to the classroom that resonated deeply with students, many of which would return to the region to teach alongside Dorinda. She taught in the Mercedes public school system for several years, but most of her career was in McAllen. Dorinda taught and served as chairwoman of the McAllen High School home economics department from 1962 until her retirement in 1985.

“My mother’s students loved her,” said Dee Ann. “Those young teachers that came back became lifelong friends of hers; she became a mentor to them. It is for that reason that we like the student clinical teaching aspect of the program at UTRGV.”

In addition to raising a family and working, the Van Burkleos were also very involved at St. Mark United Methodist Church in McAllen.

Dorinda, in particular, served on multiple boards and committees through the years. Their children fondly remember the couple working and serving food together at church spaghetti dinners for the community.

Dee Ann recalls that raising four children in the early years meant there was not a lot of money for philanthropy but, her parents always gave their time to the children’s schools, their church, mentoring young teachers, and to employees at the dealership. She believes that their example of philanthropy, given in small ways, had a cumulative impact on the community over the years.

Before their deaths, Jimmy and Dorinda formed a charitable trust. It is through this trust that the endowment to UTRGV was made possible. “Most of their lives, they just did good things, never really seeing the true impact of their efforts,” said Dee Ann. “We are all so happy that now there is a fund in their honor that will positively and visibly impact this community.”

## About the Clinical Teaching Program at UTRGV

Clinical teaching is the culminating experience in a student’s professional development. The immersive experience places students in the classroom setting, preparing them for their roles as professional educators by developing high competency levels through a supervised teaching experience. The clinical teaching program is a full-time school-based practicum supervised by an experienced certified teacher and a UTRGV supervisor. During this time, students gain practical experience before they embark on a career in education.



Pictured: Dorinda Ward Van Burkleo

“The Clinical Teaching Program provides the opportunity for students to put into practice everything they have learned throughout the teaching preparation program,” said Dr. Alma D. Rodríguez, Dean of the College of Education and P-16 Integration at UTRGV. “Teacher candidates can refine their skills in a classroom, under the guidance of a school district mentor teacher and a university field supervisor. It is an irreplaceable experience before a student becomes a teacher.”

The Dorinda and James Van Burkleo Endowed Scholarship supports the education and training of tomorrow’s preeminent educators. The clinical teaching program is a transformative experience for undergraduate students. Relief from the financial burden encountered during the semester will have a resounding impact on future educators. The Van Burkleo family’s donation to the College of Education and P-16 Integration is a testament to the strengths of the program and faculty at UTRGV.

“I truly believe this gift is a gamechanger for our teacher preparation program as it affords us the opportunity to support high-achieving teacher candidates during their final semester,” said Dean Rodríguez. “The impact of the gift will be received first-hand by teacher candidates but will transcend generations as the scholarship recipients enter classrooms to instruct our community’s children.”



Members of the Van Burkleo family who provided a \$1 million Legacy Gift to UTRGV with university representatives on Monday, Oct. 4, 2021 in McAllen, Texas. From L to R: Pat Van Burkleo; Dee Ann V. Payne; Dr. Alma Rodríguez, UTRGV Dean of the College of Education and P-16 Integration; Terry Van Burkleo; Dr. Janna Arney, UTRGV Executive Vice President and Provost; Dr. Kelly Nassour, UTRGV Executive Vice President for Institutional Advancement; Luis Leal, UTRGV Senior Director of Development.

## A Legacy of Giving Back

James and Dorinda taught their children the importance of higher education, especially in the South Texas region. “Education was very important to my mother, so we felt UTRGV would be the best place to start giving back to the community,” said Terry. He emphasized that they chose UTRGV because many students will stay in the region to teach, ultimately continuing their mother’s legacy.

Pat echoed his brother’s comments, stating that a donation to UTRGV seemed natural because education was an integral aspect of their family, and they felt the need to honor that. He said, “Giving to the UTRGV College of Education spoke to our family values and the trickle effect that it will have within the community.”

James and Dorinda Van Burkleo empowered their children to think big – big enough to support a new generation of educators in the Rio Grande Valley. The Dorinda and James Van Burkleo Endowed Scholarship will have a far and lasting impact on the local community.

“By donating their time, effort, and funds, the Van Burkleos set an example of selfless giving that will resonate throughout the region for years to come,” stated Dr. Guy Bailey, President of UTRGV. “The Dorinda and James Van Burkleo Endowed Scholarship will benefit countless students in perpetuity.”