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I've learned that we must never give up our desire and willingness to try to make things better, and we must always hold ourselves and others to higher standards. We should never allow any school system to give its students less than the very best education it can.

BUCK HARLESS

The Bridge Builder

Will Allen Dromgoole

An old man, going a lone highway,
Came at the evening cold and gray,
To a chasm, vast and deep and wide,
Through which was flowing a sullen tide.
The old man crossed in the twilight dim-
That sullen stream had no fears for him;
But he turned, when he reached the other side,
And built a bridge to span the tide.

"Old man," said a fellow pilgrim near,
"You are wasting strength in building here.
Your journey will end with the ending day;
You never again must pass this way.
You have crossed the chasm, deep and wide,
Why build you the bridge at the eventide?"

The builder lifted his old gray head.
"Good friend, in the path I have come," he said,
"There followeth after me today
A youth whose feet must pass this way.
This chasm that has been naught to me
To that fair-haired youth may a pitfall be.
He, too, must cross in the twilight dim;
Good friend, I am building the bridge for him."



THERE FOLLOWETH AFTER ME

The Legacy of Buck Harless

The true measure of a legacy is not found in titles, headlines, or the buildings and institutions that bear one's name, but in the lives forever changed by one person's generosity and vision. James H. "Buck" Harless leaves behind such a legacy—one defined by the bridges he created to enable others to step into the futures of their dreams.

In *A Most Fortunate Life*, Buck urged young people to "take the mantle of leadership and work to make life better for their generation and generations to come." These words were not merely hopeful advice. They reflect the path he traveled and the steps he took to make the way easier for others. He committed himself to providing opportunities that helped people rise, grow, and realize their maximum potential.

Buck's legacy is woven into the ongoing story of West Virginia, serving as a living reminder of how one person's commitment to building bridges for others can echo for generations. He made a positive difference in the lives of countless individuals and families—not only through employment at his business ventures, but also his steadfast commitment to helping others thrive. He used his wealth, influence, and compassion to help people move from where they were to where they could be, creating pathways for them to realize their best selves.

His generosity was not driven by ego, but marked by quiet, faithful efforts to lift others up. Buck's dedication to his community is reflected in the institutions and initiatives he championed to improve the lives of his fellow West Virginians. Whether through the creation of the Larry Joe Harless Community Center—providing wellness and recreational opportunities for families in his hometown of Gilbert—or his efforts to expand healthcare access in rural areas, his giving was always guided by the desire to build a stronger future.

At the heart of Buck's philanthropy was an unwavering belief in education's power to transform lives. He understood that the economic gap in West Virginia could best be narrowed by opening doors for students, families, and educators. From establishing numerous scholarships, funding professorships across the state, and launching programs designed to expand access to quality education, his support was far more than financial gifts; it was an investment in possibility. The June Harless Center for Rural Educational Research and Development at Marshall University, named in honor of his late wife, stands today as a lasting testament to their shared commitment to empowering the next generation of learners and educators.

"A good education gives a child the tools to succeed. Having the necessary tools can solve so many problems, like overcoming poverty."

Today, his stewardship continues to carry others forward. His indelible mark is seen in the students who pursue their dreams, the educators who are enabled to inspire and uplift them, and the communities that continue to thrive because of his contributions. Buck's life teaches us that the greatest legacies are not built by deeds done for personal acclaim—but by improving the path for those that follow.