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# \$3 MILLION GIFT BOOSTS SUSTAINABILITY AT CNU

## REDEKOP ENDOWMENT CONTRIBUTES TO " THE GREATER GOOD"

by [Jim Hanchett](#) | November 8, 2024

*Read time: about 2 min*

The Redekop Family Endowment has donated \$3 million to fund projects advancing sustainability at Christopher Newport University.

The gift, the largest single donation to CNU in the University's history with a sustainability focus, was made by Leadership Studies professor Dr. Benjamin Redekop on behalf of his family's endowment and to honor his parents, Calvin and Freda Redekop.

"We here at CNU owe it to all of our constituents to be good stewards of our natural and financial resources, and I am thrilled that the Redekop Family can play a role in making CNU more sustainable, with sustainability defined as 'the ability for social and ecological systems to thrive together in perpetuity,'" Redekop said.

The gift of \$1 million for each of three years will support programs and infrastructure that save the University money and propel it forward on a path to net-zero environmental impact.

"Sustainability projects funded from this gift will provide our students with concrete examples of CNU's commitment to the greater good, ideas on how to become more environmentally sustainable in their own lives, and hope for the future of the planet," Redekop said.

Redekop also credited President William G. Kelly and the [Going Greener](#) campaign he launched with inspiring the growth of a culture of sustainability. The gift will be dedicated to the Going Greener Revolving Fund that is a repository of money saved through eco-friendly facilities improvements that is then a source of grants for additional projects.

“I am deeply grateful to Dr. Redekop and the Redekop Family Endowment for this gift that will have an enduring impact on the University, the community and the Commonwealth,” President Kelly said. “Ben is an effective and admired professor, gives generously of his time and talent to many University endeavors and now, through philanthropy, is moving our campus toward being a model of sustainability. In this region, which includes rivers, bays and an ocean, the Redekop Family Endowment will help us demonstrate that we are a good neighbor, eager to protect our beautiful corner of the world.”

Calvin and Freda Redekop held a similar protective view about their beautiful corner of the world - the Shenandoah Valley. Dr. Cal Redekop was a sociologist who taught at a number of Mennonite colleges before retiring to the Valley and supporting causes related to the environment at Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) and in the surrounding area. He was also an entrepreneur, helping start several solar energy companies as well as helping build Kansas-based Excel Industries into a major manufacturer of commercial zero-turn mowers and landscaping equipment.

An EMU tribute published after Dr. Cal Redekop’s passing in 2022 noted he helped inspire and fund many of the solar arrays at EMU, Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community, and other major organizations around the valley. He was also involved with supporting and connecting VMRC’s Willow Run Farm with EMU’s Sustainable Food Initiative to grow and harvest vegetables.

The brothers Ben, Bill, and Fred Redekop, through the CNU gift from their Family Endowment, are continuing that legacy of concern for the environment. “I am sure that Calvin and Freda would be very pleased with this gift, if they were still around, and they deserve all the credit for it,” said Dr. Benjamin Redekop.

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## MORE ABOUT PROFESSOR REDEKOP:

[Benjamin W. Redekop](#) received a PhD in History from the University of British Columbia. Formerly Thompson Chair of Leadership Studies at Kettering University, he is currently Professor of Leadership Studies at Christopher Newport University. He joined the faculty in 2008. His books include “Environmentally Sustainable Leadership: Past, Present, and Future” (Edward Elgar, 2024); “Innovation in Environmental Leadership: Critical Perspectives” (Routledge, 2018); “Leadership for Environmental Sustainability” (Routledge, 2010); “Power, Authority, and the Anabaptist Tradition” (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); and “Enlightenment and Community” (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000). He has published articles in The Leadership Quarterly, Leadership, Management Decision, The Encyclopedia of Sustainability, Building Leadership Bridges, and Journal of the History of Ideas, among other venues.

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