

Harris & Eliza Kempner Maritime Undergraduate Fellowship

Established in 1995 by the Harris and Eliza Kempner Fund

The Harris and Eliza Kempner Fund (HEKF) is a private family foundation that focuses on projects that use resources creatively to improve the quality of life, primarily within the greater Galveston area. The Fund's mission is to further the vision and heritage of the Kempner family's commitment to philanthropy and sense of responsibility to society.

The impetus for starting a foundation in 1946 came from the family's concern for the many local charities they supported. They realized that conditions that typically follow economic depressions and wars could affect their ability to support charities in time of greatest need. The Galveston Foundation (later renamed Harris and Eliza Kempner Fund) was founded in 1946 by the 3 sons and 1 grandson of Harris Kempner, who emigrated through Ellis Island in 1853. After working as a day laborer in New York, while perfecting his English, he came to Texas, ending up in Galveston in 1868. He became a successful businessman and married Eliza Seinsheimer in 1872. There were eight surviving children (four males and four females). The sons expanded and enlarged the family business interests; the companies were generous in their support of local charities. The advent of World War II and the reduction in their resources led them to establish the foundation to allow the more prosperous years to provide for the lean ones.

Now in the sixth generation, living descendants of Harris Kempner number 105, ranging in age from 5 months to 85 years. They live on three different continents and all over the United States and continue to fulfill the Kempner family's vision and heritage, and through the HEKF, to seek to improve the quality of life for the Galveston community.

Today, the HEKF offers grants to nonprofit organizations through seven program areas that primarily serve the Galveston, Texas community.

