Geoff and Linda Hirt: A legacy of giving at DePaul
The number of donor-funded scholarships available at DePaul

536
Throughout its 112-year history, DePaul University has been consistently recognized as an institution where faculty and staff care deeply about students. The university community is called to educate in the Vincentian tradition and to model behavior which helps students grow in that tradition. Every day, these values are demonstrated by faculty and staff through their dedication to sharing wisdom, and to guiding and supporting students as they proceed along their educational journey.

One important and highly symbolic example of their dedication is the fact that many faculty and staff offer consistent, unfailing financial support to DePaul. Faculty and staff make generous gifts to support scholarships, academic programs and facilities. They contribute as much as $5 million annually, and their collective impact is significant and sustaining for the institution.

Each member of the university community — faculty and staff, students, alumni, trustees and friends — are being asked to share in developing the resources necessary for the next generation of DePaul students. Faculty and staff, who perhaps know best our students and their needs, are investing their resources in those dreams in ever-increasing numbers. Thanks to efforts like this, we demonstrate that the DePaul community is working together to make students’ dreams reality.

I am incredibly proud of our faculty and staff, and profoundly grateful for their dedicated work and support. The personal financial support proffered by these exceptional people is a visible expression of their commitment to this institution, this mission and this campaign. The sacrifices made by DePaul faculty and staff authentically reflect the spirit of St. Vincent, and I humbly thank each of them.

Each year for many years now, faculty member Geoff Hirt and Associate Vice President Cindy Summers have organized a group of volunteer faculty and staff to seek gifts from their colleagues across the university. As a result of their dedicated efforts, the Faculty/Staff Endowed Scholarship fund, which currently stands at $200,000, annually provides one scholarship to an exemplary student in each of DePaul’s schools and colleges. The Rev. Dennis H. Holtschneider, C.M., president of DePaul, offers his reflections on the support shown by DePaul’s faculty and staff.

In the spirit of St. Vincent

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE
DePaul University has renamed McGrath Arena to McGrath-Phillips Arena in honor of Joni Phillips, a 1982 nursing graduate and the most generous benefactor in DePaul athletics history. The newly renamed arena is part of the Sullivan Athletics Center on the university’s Lincoln Park Campus.

Born into a family of eight children in Chicago’s Back of the Yards neighborhood, Phillips parlayed her DePaul nursing degree and an MBA into a multimillion-dollar healthcare services business.

“Joni’s gifts to DePaul Athletics over the years have been a shining example of one generation passing it on to the next,” says Jean Lenti Ponsetto, DePaul’s director of athletics. “We are awesomely grateful for her gifts, which have directly benefited hundreds of student-athletes past, present and future.”

“I couldn’t be prouder or more humbled,” Phillips says. “As a student almost 30 years ago, I never imagined that I would be honored with having my name on anything but a term paper.”

Phillips’ gifts have helped fund a number of initiatives, including refurbishing DePaul’s locker rooms at the Allstate Arena and endowing scholarships. She has even supplied commemorative rings for DePaul teams that have won conference championships or competed in NCAA tournaments.

In addition, the athletic director’s suite in the university’s Sullivan Center bears her name, and the balcony in McGrath-Phillips Arena is named for her parents, Roman and Josephine Nowakowski.

In January, the university inducted Phillips into the DePaul Athletic Hall of Fame as the 2011 recipient of the Dr. Robert Hamilton Special Service Award.

[ TO SUPPORT DEPAUL ATHLETICS, CALL THAD DOHN AT (773) 325-1456 ]
For the past 15 years, DePaul’s Asylum and Immigration Law Clinic (AILC) has worked to ensure that immigrants in the Chicago area have had the legal support they need to exercise their rights.

Since it opened in 1996, AILC has assisted more than 3,000 refugees and immigrants who came to the United States to flee persecution in their home countries or simply to find a better life. Through its Legal Resources Project for Immigrant Service Providers, AILC also offers legal services to community-based organizations (CBOs) that provide assistance to immigrants. The project is the brainchild of the Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois, the Chicago Bar Foundation and the Polk Bros. Foundation.

“We had noticed an increasing number of CBOs cropping up in Chicago during the late 1990s that were desperate to obtain immigration-related legal services,” says Mark Marquardt, deputy director of the Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois. One CBO partner, Centro de Información of Kane County, was founded in 1972. Its 15-member staff now helps more than 15,000 immigrants each year with a variety of services, including parenting and life-skills classes, programs for at-risk teens and a large food pantry.

Rosa Sanborn, who coordinates the organization’s immigration services program, oversees more than 950 immigration-related legal cases each year.

“Without DePaul’s legal expertise, especially the time they put in researching our more complex cases, it would be impossible for us to handle all these things,” she says. “We couldn’t do it without them.”

CBOs aren’t the only ones that benefit from the clinic’s work, says Lakshmi Lakshmanan, who specializes in family immigration law as a part-time managing attorney with Chicago’s Indo-American Center and in her own practice. She spent a year at AILC as a visiting student from the University of Missouri, where she received her law degree in 2008.

“I sought out DePaul purely for the clinic,” she says. “The experience of being a student/attorney was amazing. The faculty gave us a lot of autonomy to run our own cases, but they always challenged us and pushed us to reach the highest level of legal service. “The fact that the clinic served a population in need made me feel very good about choosing immigration law,” she adds. “I knew I was doing good work.”

The Legal Resources Project is generously funded by the Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois, Advancing Justice (a funding partnership between the Chicago Bar Foundation and the Chicago Area Foundation for Legal Services) and the Polk Bros. Foundation. It has also received funding from the Illinois Equal Justice Foundation.
Geoff and Linda Hirt’s first meeting probably didn’t raise any eyebrows. The 20-year-olds had both grown up in the Cleveland suburbs, were both attending Ohio Wesleyan (where she studied piano; he economics), and both sang in the university’s choir.

So, when the choir director one day asked Geoff to drive a carload of fellow singers to a concert in Philadelphia, it didn’t seem unusual that Linda would be among the passengers. Nor did it seem odd that the pair would strike up a friendship during the trip.

What was puzzling, at least to Geoff’s fraternity brothers, was that Linda eventually agreed to marry him. “They couldn’t believe she’d have me,” he says, grinning from ear to ear.

Nevertheless, Geoff, a professor and former chair of DePaul’s finance department, and Linda, who teaches foreign language diction and coaches aspiring opera singers in the School of Music, have shared 44 years together (27 of them at DePaul), bound by an abiding love of family, music, teaching and travel, often with groups of students in tow.

AN INNOVATIVE GIFT TO DEPAUL
Longtime supporters of the university, the Hirts recently made a unique set of three interlinked gifts: They created a $100,000 international investment fund to be managed by Kellstadt MBA students, and they endowed two additional funds, one for finance students who participate in the study abroad program and the other to support international travel opportunities for music students.

“Student-managed investment funds are not unusual in graduate programs these days,” Geoff says. “But what is unique about this one is, first, the students can invest only in companies outside the United States, and second, proceeds from the investment fund go to further support the finance and music funds.”

As the world economy continues to globalize, he explains, an international perspective is fast becoming a required component of any educational experience, including finance. (Incidentally, his own textbook, “Foundations of Financial Management,” now in its 14th edition, has been translated into 14 languages, including Mandarin.)

An international perspective is required in music too, according to Linda, who, during a 10-year tenure as head of the School of Music’s
Vocal Division, spent her time stressing the importance of learning foreign languages and foreign cultures to budding art-song and opera singers.

In addition to her coaching duties, she continues to conduct graduate-level language and diction classes in French, Italian and, until recently, German.

“The more our students can speak these languages, the more it will help them on their journey to become opera singers,” she says.

“But the life experience that foreign travel gives is very important too. We’ve seen firsthand how these kids’ lives have changed by going abroad.”

Over the years, the couple has taken scores of DePaul students on summer trips throughout Italy. For vocalists, this often includes a one-month stop in Urbania, where Linda teaches and performs at the Centro Studi Italiani, a language school that offers specialized programs in Italian opera. The Hirts maintain a second home in nearby Fermignano and sing in several community choirs when in town.

A LEGACY OF GENEROSITY
The Hirts previously established three endowed scholarships in music, two in honor of the couple’s parents and the third in honor of Vittorio Angeli, a music-loving friend and neighbor in Fermignano who died in 2004 at the age of 57.

Geoff and Linda have been annual DePaul donors since they arrived at the university in 1983, and in 1995 Geoff became co-chair (with Associate Vice President of Student Affairs Cindy Summers) of DePaul’s faculty/staff scholarship campaign committee. The faculty/staff scholarship fund provides one-time awards to worthy students in each of the university’s schools and colleges.

“The first scholarships were for $300,” says Geoff. “Last year, the awards had grown to $4,000 each, and the endowment has grown to more than $200,000. I’m very proud of the support my DePaul colleagues have given to that effort, and I am very proud to have been part of it.”

Geoff and Linda serve on the Many Dreams, One Mission Campaign Committee for Performing Arts, and Geoff also serves on the executive committee of the School of Music’s Advisory Board.

The Hirts’ generosity to DePaul is only one part of a philanthropic legacy that stretches back to their respective childhoods.

“We were both raised in families where giving was important,” says Linda. “It’s a meaningful part of both of our lives; it also reflects DePaul’s Vincentian mission.”

When they are not globetrotting, the Hirts live in Chicago. They have two married children: Amy (MED ’00), whose husband, Cary Jacobs, is a Double Demon in music education and saxophone performance; and Brian, a former program analyst at DePaul. The Hirts have three grandchildren.

New alumna signs on to campaign for five years

Lauren (Levine) Upton, who came to DePaul in 2002 on a full basketball scholarship, discovered her true calling when she began tutoring fellow athletes during her sophomore year.

“I realized that the questions they asked most had less to do with how to do math problems than with how to get the most from their academic opportunity at DePaul,” she says. “I loved it, and I knew pretty quickly that academic advising was what I wanted to pursue professionally.”

Upton forfeited a fifth year of basketball eligibility to complete a double major in communication and psychology and to prepare for a master’s program in liberal studies. She continued to work as a graduate assistant in the athletics department, and in 2010, the one-time Blue Demon small forward was hired full time as an academic advisor in the College of Communication.

Upton lost no time in joining the ranks of DePaul’s President’s Club by taking advantage of the special $250 recent-graduate membership level. In fact, inspired by the Steans Challenge for Scholarships, she pledged an additional $250 for each of the next five years for a total of $1,250 (plus the match).

“In my job I am reminded every day why scholarship money is critical,” she says. “Even seemingly small amounts can provide much needed resources for these students.”
Scholarships help the best and the brightest shine

Each year the Faculty/Staff Endowed Scholarship fund distributes as much as $4,000 to a top student in each of DePaul’s schools and colleges. Meet two recent recipients:

CHARLENE RHINEHART: COMMERCE 2009
Charlene Rhinehart is nothing if not driven. During her four years at DePaul, the finance and accountancy double major (she also minored in community service) racked up enough academic accolades to flatter the résumés of any three graduates. In addition to graduating cum laude, she presided over the DePaul Golden Key International Honour Society for a year and held membership in five other honor societies.

Outside the classroom her activities were equally impressive: co-founder of the DePaul Community Service Association’s INSPIRE program, which provides volunteer tutors for Chicago elementary school students; a fellow and peer mentor for the university’s Student Leadership Institute; a fellow with the Steans Center for Community-based Service Learning; vice president and community service chair for the National Association of Black Accountants; and … well, the list goes on.

In short, a stellar academic record combined with an extraordinary roster of extracurricular and social outreach activities earned Charlene the state’s highest collegiate honor — the Lincoln Academy of Illinois’ Student Laureate Medallion, an award given annually to just 44 outstanding college seniors from around the state. Charlene, who grew up in Chicago’s Englewood neighborhood, is the first in her family to attend college. She attributes much of her success at DePaul to her parents’ support, the nurturing atmosphere she encountered here and the availability of scholarship funds, including the faculty/staff scholarship she received in her senior year.

“Everyone at DePaul genuinely believes in reaching out and helping students tap into their potential,” she says. “Receiving scholarship support allowed me to worry less about financial matters and devote my time to study and community activities.”

Charlene, a certified public accountant, currently works as an analyst with JPMorgan Chase in Chicago. In addition to community service projects, she is active with Toastmasters International and has developed a new passion for salsa dancing. To keep up with Charlene, check out her website at www.misscdrhinehart.com.

José Alvarado: Education 2010
It takes a certain amount of faith to invest in strangers, according to José Alvarado. But he says that’s exactly what donors do each time they contribute to DePaul’s Faculty/Staff Endowed Scholarship fund.

Those financial “leaps of faith” — hundreds of which come from DePaul employees every year — helped provide the extra financial support José needed to get through an unplanned fifth year at the university.

“It had been my dream since the first grade to become a teacher,” he says. “Without the generosity of DePaul’s faculty and staff, that dream would not have been possible.”

Because of municipal belt tightening and job cuts, the 2010 graduate has yet to achieve his No. 1 goal — getting a full-time job teaching Spanish in Chicago Public Schools — but he did land a substitute teaching position at Lázaro Cardenas, a CPS magnet school on Chicago’s South Side, where he has worked since January.

As a substitute teacher, no two days are the same, which José admits can make for a stressful week. Despite the challenge though, he has no doubts about choosing teaching as his profession, one that he would like to practice here in his hometown.

A product of Chicago Public Schools himself, José did his in-class training at Chicago’s Marine Math and Science Academy, where he taught Spanish to 9th through 12th graders.

“I want to make a difference not only in the classroom but in the educational system as well,” he says. “My DePaul professors and student teaching experience have helped me to become aware of issues affecting education, especially among bilingual populations, and that is ultimately the area I want to focus on.”
WHY WE GIVE
Faculty and staff hear the DePaul call

When Silvia Morales opened her email on the morning of Nov. 2, 2009, she was shocked to read that Frankie Valencia, a star of that year’s senior class, had been killed during a random shooting outside a Halloween party just two nights before.

Morales, payment center manager on DePaul’s Lincoln Park Campus, had never met Valencia, but she was moved by the email’s description of the young man’s positive attitude, his desire to make a difference in the world and his many accomplishments.

When Morales saw that a scholarship fund had been established at DePaul in Valencia’s honor, she asked her co-workers Blanca Diaz and Cristian Morales (no relation) if they would join her in making a contribution. “We took money from our Christmas savings to donate to the scholarship,” Morales says. “It felt really good.”

They weren’t alone. Dozens of donors, including the DePaul employees interviewed for this story, did the same, helping raise enough money to endow the Frankie Valencia Memorial Scholarship this spring.

DePaul faculty and staff members annually contribute as much as $5 million to a wide variety of university initiatives, but they are particularly generous when it comes to funding scholarships, from special efforts like the Valencia scholarship to the Faculty/Staff Endowed Scholarship, which supports one student every year from each of DePaul’s schools and colleges.

“I think it says a lot if you take students with access challenges and help them gain a great education,” says Kris Gallagher, internal consultant for university marketing communications and a longtime donor. “That’s DePaul’s mission. It makes me proud to work here and easy for me to contribute.”

Such faculty/staff support also helps attract even more gifts, according to Helen Marlborough, associate professor of English and director of DePaul’s University Honors Program. “Outside donors are inspired when they know the faculty and staff support the university,” she says. “It’s a testimonial to DePaul that those who work here support it. Their gifts have symbolic as well as monetary value.”

In giving to the Valencia scholarship Gallagher felt an emotional pull as well. “I did not have the privilege of knowing Frankie,” she says. “But from everything I read, he was the kind of student I want to support.”

Silvia Morales agrees: “These students are our future.”
Born and raised in Southern California, DePaul Vice Chancellor the Rev. Charles “Chas” Shelby, C.M., grew up close to nature — and he was fascinated by it.

Whether investigating a tidal pool on the beach or stargazing at his family’s San Fernando Valley home, the young Chas not only appreciated the beauty and complexity of the natural world, he also loved learning about how it worked.

“When I was a real small kid, I loved to go out at night and look at the stars,” he recalls. “My grandmother gave me a book called ‘Splendour of the Heavens,’ which really captured my imagination. I think that’s where it all started.”

It didn’t take long for Fr. Shelby’s enthusiasm for astronomy to broaden into a passion for all things scientific. He studied math and physics throughout high school and seminary, and in 1971, three years after his ordination, Shelby earned a master’s degree in physics from DePaul.

Fr. Shelby taught for eight years then joined the staff of the Association of the Miraculous Medal, headquartered near the Vincentian motherhouse in Perryville, Mo. He initially volunteered as a part-time computer consultant but swiftly rose to become the organization’s president, a position he held for the next 22 years. He returned to DePaul as a vice chancellor in 2005, where he works in the university’s Office of Advancement.

Fr. Shelby also teaches a new online course called “What Was God Thinking When He Invented the Universe?” through the School for New Learning. The discussion-based class explores the intersections of religion and science.

Shortly after returning to DePaul, Fr. Shelby gave a $500,000 leadership gift to the Campaign for Excellence in Science, which raised $20 million toward the construction of the Monsignor Andrew J. McGowan Science Building, and an additional $125,000 to endow the Rev. Charles F. Shelby Endowed Scholarship in Physics. In all, Fr. Shelby has given more than $1 million to DePaul, including his gifts to science and endowed scholarships in music and theatre.

Fr. Shelby notes that while Vincentian priests turn over their salaries to the order, they are free to dispose of whatever property they owned before they were ordained — in his case an inheritance.

“It’s very gratifying to give to DePaul as a member of both the staff and the faculty,” he says. “When you work for DePaul, you give of your time in your capacity as an employee. By giving financially, you can reach beyond your niche and help the university in areas that are important to you personally. It can be an expression of your personal values.”

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Barry Epstein (COM '67), a longtime and generous supporter of DePaul, recently donated $350,000 to endow a fellowship in the School of Accountancy and Management Information Services (SAMIS). The Dr. Barry J. Epstein Endowed Faculty Fellowship will provide funding for experienced and acknowledged innovators on the faculty to conduct research on best practices and methodologies in teaching. Recipients would also be expected to mentor new faculty. Epstein, a college professor himself for four years early in his career, is a partner at Russell Novak & Co. LLP, a Chicago-based public accounting and financial litigation advisory firm. Advancing DePaul recently talked to Epstein and Kevin Stevens, director of SAMIS, about the fellowship:

Q: Why did you establish the fellowship?
Epstein: It is important that teachers continually strive to improve their teaching technique, to be creative and to be actively engaged in what they do. I hope my gift will allow DePaul faculty members opportunities to go out and see what others deem to be “best practices,” and to keep their fingers on the pulse of — and contribute to — cutting-edge teaching methodologies.

Q: How does it work?
Epstein: I’m a big believer in the cliché, “If it’s not measured, it’s not done,” so to be considered for the fellowship, faculty must propose a project that has a measurable outcome, something beyond their normal duties that would ultimately improve pedagogy in some way. Dr. Stevens and his colleagues select the winning proposals, but I am delighted to tell you that the first recipient of the fellowship is Associate Professor Cindy Durtschi, whose specialty is forensic accounting, a discipline that is very close to my heart. She’s been with DePaul since 2008, having previously earned tenure at Utah State University.

Q: What’s the nature of her work?
Stevens: Cindy has developed a series of cases that require students to perform as they would have to in the real world. The cases demand critical thinking, teamwork and effective presentation skills. For example, students must wade through volumes of material and then ask critical questions about the material to determine whether fraud has indeed been committed. Then they must interview the perpetrator of the fraud [a role to be played by Dr. Epstein] and present the results of their analysis to the class. These cases are the bedrock of our new forensic accounting class. I am pleased to report that her first case on fraud (based on a fictional minor league baseball team) was cited by one of our leading journals, Issues in Accounting Education, as the best teaching case of the year in 2003, and is in use at more than 34 universities across the country.

Dr. Durtschi continues to develop additional cases. In fact, she is currently working with Assistant Professor Mary Mindak on a new case and is mentoring her on best practices in implementing case work in the accounting classroom.

Q: How will this benefit the educational experience at DePaul?
Stevens: We have an outstanding faculty. What I envision is rotating the fellowship among them as a way to continually challenge them to think about what effective teaching is and to share their best experiences with other people.

[ LEARN MORE AT ACCOUNTANCY.DEPAUL.EDU ]
EVENTS AT DEPAUL »

JULY
27:  Summer Send-off*; Riverwalk Grand Pavilion, Naperville, Ill.

AUGUST
3:  Summer Send-off*; Reflections on Deep Lake, Lake Villa, Ill.
10:  Summer Send-off*; Flick Park, Glenview, Ill.

SEPTEMBER
16:  “Chicago Needs More Famous Artists” exhibit opens at DePaul’s new art museum

* Summer Send-offs are casual gatherings where alumni share their DePaul experiences and welcome first-year students and recent graduates into the alumni community.

To see photos from previous alumni events, visit the DePaul Spirit Flickr group online at www.flickr.com/depaulspirit.

Save the Date!
DEPAUL UNIVERSITY REUNION WEEKEND
October 14-16, 2011

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