

NEWS OF FACULTY, STAFF & RETIREE GIVING TO MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

# OUR IMPACT

SPRING 2020

As COVID-19 continues to upend our world, the last thing we wanted to do was send our publication just because it was scheduled! So this issue is a bit different. We hope to offer some good news and inspiration about your efforts to help and support the MSU community. Thank you and stay well.

## TAKING NOTE

*College of Music employee and retiree donors gathered at the new Billman Music Pavilion in early March, as construction crews were still wrapping up painting, paneling and other finishing touches.*

STUDENT FOOD BANK • EMERGENCY SUPPORT FUNDS • YOUR GIFTS AT WORK

## TAKING NOTE

# Music faculty and staff leave their mark on Billman Music Pavilion

If their dedication to students wasn't apparent enough through their work in classrooms, concert halls and administrative offices, look no further than the new Billman Music Pavilion for the incontrovertible proof: faculty, staff and retirees of the College of Music are wholly and enthusiastically committed to the success and wellness of their students.

It's visible in their faces when they talk about how cinderblock and old tile have given way to spring-loaded floors, acoustic ceilings and soundproof walls.

Soon, it'll also be visible on a wall plaque, commemorating 68 College of Music faculty, staff and retirees of the College of Music who made a collective gift to name a space in the 37,000-square-foot pavilion. In total, 75% of the college's current faculty and staff contributed to the project.

They chose to name the Study Mezzanine: a second-floor balcony area with counter space, seating, outlets to charge devices, and an impressive bird's-eye view of the two-story, glassed-in Charles Atrium and West Circle Drive outside a two-story wall of windows. It is sure to be a high-traffic spot, and faculty and

staff donors recognized its potential for universal appeal among students.

"So much of success in music relies on your skills in collaborating, and connecting with others both musically and interpersonally," says Christine Beamer ('19), director of Career Services and Music Entrepreneurship. "I hope that this non-classroom space will encourage students to gather, to discover commonalities despite differences in discipline or areas of study."

University Distinguished Professor of Jazz Bass and Director of the Jazz Studies Program Rodney Whitaker agrees, "Music students spend the majority of their time, maybe ten to twelve hours a day, at school. It is important to have a community space where they can relax in an inspiring environment."

Director of Choral Programs and Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research David Rayl was thinking of students *and* of the broader community when he gave: "I gave to the project because I believe in the fundamental value of music to our society, now more than ever," he says. "The College of Music provides a first-class music education to our students and life-enhancing experiences to non-music majors, and the Billman Music Pavilion will play a major role in

the college's preparation of music professionals for generations to come."

The original Music Building, completed in 1939, was the first academic building on MSU's campus designated solely for the liberal arts. The adjacent Music Practice Building was added just a few steps away in 1968. Both remained largely unchanged structurally, and for decades, music students have thrived in spite of the buildings' age and acoustical challenges, and faculty and staff have made the best of instructional and performance spaces that were no longer adequate for teaching and making music.

This is something Clarinet Professor Emerita Elsa Verdehr knows all too well after 50 years at MSU. She and her husband, fellow Emeritus Professor and Violinist Walter Verdehr, joined their colleagues in supporting the project.

"Walter and I loved our years at MSU and working with wonderful, talented students," Elsa says. "We are delighted that music students can now have modern, improved facilities in which to explore their talents—particularly new practice rooms!—and that our friends on the faculty will also benefit from the grand new music pavilion."

An official ribbon cutting, originally scheduled for April 17, has been postponed as this spring—usually a time of celebration on campus—has taken a challenging turn on a global scale. Everything, from in-person final exams to final recitals, has been canceled this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"At this time, our hearts and minds are with our students—particularly the Class of 2020," says College of Music Dean James Forger. "They were here at the beginning, when our long-held dream started to become an exciting reality, and they were supposed to be here at the end, to be among the first to fully enjoy the facility that grew up alongside them."

"We look forward to the day we can welcome all of our students and alumni back into our incredible building—because these fresh classrooms and study areas, state-of-the-art practice rooms and beautiful new performance spaces are far too quiet without them."

**LEARN MORE** about supporting the College of Music by contacting Senior Director of Development Rebecca Surian at [surian@msu.edu](mailto:surian@msu.edu) or by calling (517) 353-9872.



**"We look forward to the day we can welcome all of our students and alumni back into our incredible building—because these fresh classrooms and study areas, state-of-the-art practice rooms and beautiful new performance spaces are far too quiet without them."**

— JAMES FORGER  
Dean, College of Music

The generosity of faculty, staff and retirees who contributed to name the Study Mezzanine will be commemorated on a plaque in the finished space.

**NEW TAX LAW**

The CARES Act of March 2020 not only aims to provide financial relief from the coronavirus pandemic but also could influence your charitable giving decisions in 2020.

Under the new law:

- You may deduct up to \$300 in gifts to charities, even without itemizing your deductions.
- Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs) from your individual retirement accounts are suspended for 2020. Previous tax law increased the age for RMDs to 72. You may still make direct distributions from your IRA to charities, starting at age 70½.
- You may apply up to 100% (rather than 60%) of your cash gifts to charities against your adjusted gross income.

Contact Deanna Gast, senior director in the Office of Gift Planning, at (517) 884-1000 or [giftplan@msu.edu](mailto:giftplan@msu.edu), or visit [giftplanning.msu.edu](http://giftplanning.msu.edu) to explore options as you are developing your estate plans and wish to remember MSU.

**LEARN MORE** at [go.msu.edu/CARESact](http://go.msu.edu/CARESact)

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# A SPARTAN SAFETY NET

## MSU Community Bands Together to Help Student Food Bank Meet Critical Need



MSU's Chef Kurt Kwiatkowski ('96; '05, M.S.) (left), volunteers unload items from refrigerated semi trailer at the food bank location (bottom right).

The MSU Student Food Bank has long been a source of comfort—a place where students find not just help with hunger but support from other students, right in their own community.

So it is little wonder that hundreds turned to the food bank after the COVID-19 pandemic upended their lives and caused uncertainty, panic and food insecurity.

Their community rallied. Contributions of time and resources from across campus resulted in serving more than 750 MSU students and families, and an additional 150 community members in local shelters, over a single weekend.

Support poured in from across campus.

Chefs from Culinary Services and the Spartan Hospitality Group helped with preparation and distribution plans after Residential and Hospitality Services stepped in with surplus food from cafeterias and the refrigerated trucks to deliver and store the food at the food bank.

“There was no reason to let that food go to waste when it could be given to people in need,” says Vennie Gore, vice president for MSU Auxiliary Enterprises. “We recognize many students rely on the university for more than just education. For some, we also represent a safe space to live with reliable meal service. Taking measures to keep our community healthy and safe during an outbreak doesn’t mean we stop being a resource for our students.”

MSU physicians provided oversight and supplies to ensure that proper precautions were followed to keep everyone safe.

“We all felt that this was what it means to act as a community and a Spartan,” says Dennis Martell ('91, M.S.; '94, Ph.D.), director of health promotion in the division of Student Health and Wellness at Olin Health Center. “Giving assurance to those that may not have come out all week, that their community cared, meant as much to some as the resources.”

Ongoing support has also come from Student Affairs and Services, Governmental Affairs, the Alumni Office, the Associated Students of MSU and the Council of Graduate Students. Staff at Olin Health Center, where the food bank resides, have pitched in daily to help meet the increased demand.

Due to the need for increased social distancing, food bank services are now being offered through 20-minute appointments. In this way, the food bank is continuing to serve about 24 individuals and families daily.

Food or physical donations cannot currently be accepted from community members, but monetary gifts to support the food bank’s ongoing efforts can be made.

**HOW TO HELP:** A web page compiling MSU emergency funds and places in need on campus has been created at [go.msu.edu/funds](http://go.msu.edu/funds)



## A WELL-DESIGNED LEGACY

If you've been anywhere near the Graphic Design program over the last 50 years—or even if you haven't—you probably know of the late professor emeritus Joe Kuszai.

He was recruited to Michigan State in 1965 to develop the Graphic Design program from the ground up, and he ran it for more than 25 years, while also teaching courses that decades of graphic design and visual arts students will never, ever forget.

At his retirement party in 2015, scores of alumni returned to celebrate his storied career, which began long before he ever came to teach at Michigan State. His experience designing covers and sleeves for Columbia Records, and working for big-name printers, studios, photographers and publishing houses in New York, are likely the reasons he was such an effective and innovative teacher, mentor and strong example for all his students.

Though he passed away in 2019, his legacy lives on in the alumni who are working their dream design jobs around the country. It also lives on right here on campus, in the form of a scholarship that Joe and his wife, Shirley, created, and that many of those grateful former students have since given to in his memory.

The Joe and Shirley Kuszai Endowed Scholarship in Graphic Design provides financial assistance and recognition to one or more promising graphic design students in their junior year. For one of last year's recipients, the value of the scholarship went far beyond money.

Senior Molly Killingbeck ('20) didn't officially declare a graphic design major until her junior year, and by the time she joined the program, she knew she had a lot of catching up to do before she would feel like she truly fit in.

So, she studied. She did hundreds of sketches. And her tenacity and the improvement she showed made her professors take note. They nominated her for the Kuszai scholarship.

Receiving the award sent Killingbeck a clear message: she'd found her home in graphic design, and she was welcome.

"I have always been my own worst critic," Killingbeck says. "I received this scholarship at a time when I was still trying to figure out if graphic design was a good fit for me. It gave me the boost I needed to become more involved in design-related extracurriculars like the MSU AIGA Student Group and VIM magazine.

"It was daunting at first to switch into a program so late in my college career. But the entire design faculty has been so supportive, and the other designers in this program have become my second family. It's refreshing to learn in an environment where everyone is rooting for you."

That feeling? That everyone is rooting for you and wants you to succeed? That's Joe Kuszai's legacy.

**LEARN MORE** at [go.msu.edu/kuszai](https://go.msu.edu/kuszai)



**MOLLY KILLINGBECK**, a 2019 recipient of the Joe and Shirley Kuszai Endowed Scholarship in Graphic Design.



*Joe Kuszai celebrated with family, friends, colleagues and alumni at his retirement party in 2015.*

## LORETTA VANCAMP: *an indelible part of MSU*

Though she passed away in 2006 at the age of 80, the contributions of Loretta VanCamp's work at MSU live on not only in endowed funds that will forever enable the work of MSU researchers, but now also in a new research facility that bears her name: the VanCamp Incubator.

VanCamp ('48) was a key member of the MSU team who discovered in the 1960s how platinum could play a role in halting the growth of cancer cells, leading to one of the world's most effective cancer treatments. Today, the revenues from their innovation significantly enable research grants and seed money for MSU researchers through the MSU Foundation.

The VanCamp Incubator, launched by the University Corporate Resource Park (a subsidiary of the MSU Foundation), provides space and resources for start-up companies in the areas of quantitative health, imaging and structural biology.

# PREPARING THE NEXT GENERATION

Success isn't measured in how much you achieve or even how high you rise in the ranks. Success also comes from leaving things in good order and in good hands.

Tracy Dobson, retired professor and one of the founding faculty in the Center for Gender in Global Context at MSU, has had plenty of success by every measure. The Center is flourishing. An undergraduate award is named for her there and she leads by example in making annual gifts to support a new generation of faculty, who stand on her shoulders.

Her younger self could not have imagined any of this.

Her first job at MSU was as a secretary in the Anthropology Department. She was 22 and working to support her husband, who was in graduate school. She saw women her age doing amazing things and getting Ph.D.s. It opened her eyes.

As a French major, she says she wasn't in a position to do a lot of doctoral programs, but she knew she cared about the environment and that she could get into law school at the University of Michigan.

If seeing women like her seeking Ph.D.s was eye opening, taking a course called Women and the Law was a downright epiphany. "I learned it wasn't just me," she says. "Every woman was experiencing the effects of inequality."



**SELENA HUAPILLA-PEREZ** (above), last year's winner of the Tracy Dobson Award for Undergraduate Feminist Activism, Retired faculty member Tracy Dobson (right).

She became a lawyer and worked on environmental and consumer issues for the State of Michigan. But MSU and an academic career were calling, and she soon landed a position teaching business law, later transitioning to MSU's Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, which accommodated all of her passions: gender, justice and environmental change.

"We are all deeply connected to each other and to the environment," she says. "When we show respect for that connection, our species will have a greater opportunity to continue to live on this planet."

She developed her own Women and the Law course, her "ministry," and revised and grew it throughout her tenure. Along the way, she connected with other faculty who shared her interests. When the center began to take form, she was all in.

Tracy's legacy at MSU encompassed family too. Her son also was passionate about social justice and the environment. He was a law student in the MSU College of Law, planning to help indigenous people, when he died unexpectedly at the age of 31. The Noah Dobson Cooper Scholarship Award in the College of Law, established by his parents, honors his life.

Retirement has freed Tracy to become a self-described full-time activist. But she keeps an eye on the center's activities.

"It knocks me off my feet, the quality of the people that are in charge now," says Tracy. "It is heartwarming and reassuring to see the growth in students and faculty participation. And I want to do what I can to help them raise the next generation of young people, who will be in charge in short order."



# SPARTANS HELPING SPARTANS

## #GIVINGTUESDAYNOW, MAY 5



MSU is inviting all Spartans to come together on **#GIVINGTUESDAYNOW**, a global day of giving on May 5, 2020, and an opportunity to support vital needs for students that have arisen as a result of the COVID-19 crisis.

**T**he Support Our Spartans Student Emergency Needs Fund is one of several ongoing funds providing critical support for students. Right now, it is helping students who have lost jobs, are unable to return home or face other financial challenges because of the pandemic. Over the last few weeks, more than 220 faculty, staff and retirees have given more than \$16,000 to help students. As of early April, more than 1,100 donors have contributed nearly \$79,000 to emergency assistance funds for students in need.

“It is impressive and gratifying to see how Spartans are looking out for one another,” says President Samuel L. Stanley Jr., M.D. “Many in our community are experiencing financial difficulties and your support is providing a lifeline when they need it most.”

**HOW TO HELP:** You can see the MSU emergency funds and places in need on campus at: [go.msu.edu/funds](https://go.msu.edu/funds)

**S.O.S.**

Right now, the **Support Our Spartans Student Emergency Needs Fund** is helping students who may be struggling due to the global pandemic. **Learn more at [go.msu.edu/sos](https://go.msu.edu/sos)**