

OUR COMMON BOND:

The Campaign for University School of Milwaukee

*Campaign
Newsletter
Volume XIII
Final Issue*

USM Community, Thank You for Your Commitment to Our Collective Future!

Thanks to the support of the USM community, Our Common Bond exceeded goal, closing on June 30, 2020 with more than \$30 million in gift commitments from our community. On behalf of the students, faculty, and staff of University School of Milwaukee, we are extremely grateful for your support.

Following years of planning, and in keeping with the school's culture of generosity, the Board of Trustees kicked off this \$27 million comprehensive campaign in July 2015 with goals of \$15 million in support of capital projects, \$6 million in endowment support, and another \$6 million in annual support for the USM Fund.

Each and every donor who made a gift between July 2015 and June 2020—2,105 in total—participated in the campaign's successes. Of the 2,105 total donors, 206 directly supported specific campaign initiatives,

and 58 families contributed \$100,000 or more. Additionally, Our Common Bond welcomed 101 new campaign donors.

The numerous outcomes of Our Common Bond have a direct and positive impact on our students' daily lives:

- New and improved facilities provide state-of-the-art learning spaces and long-lasting value to the school, while fostering community.
- Growth in the school's endowment, resulting from the campaign, provides resources for mission-focused priorities and strategic initiatives.
- Collectively, all gifts to the USM Fund—the greatest source of dependable and flexible funding for the school—during the five years of the campaign totaled more than \$6.8 million—the single-largest contribution to Our Common Bond.

USM shares its gratitude as we celebrate this significant accomplishment. Together, we have transformed the future of education at University School of Milwaukee, and we thank you for your important role in these successes.



Andrew and Wendy Petzold's Gifts of Time, Talent, and Treasure



Andrew and Wendy at the Our Common Bond groundbreaking.

For Andrew Petzold, it all began with cookies. "I remember when my kids were in Preschool, the teachers welcomed parental involvement," he said. "I was really excited to be able to help with reading and art, and I remember helping to bake cookies one day. I loved the facilities, the students' outcomes, and being able to participate in my children's experience at USM. I thought it would be fun to be a part of that planning process."

Along with his wife, Wendy, Andrew's involvement with the school grew over the years. Wendy served many roles within the Parents' Association (PA), including room parent, division lead, and PA president. Andrew served various roles on the Board of Trustees during his 10-year tenure on the board, including chair of the facilities committee, co-chair of the 2013 strategic planning committee, and board president from 2016 to 2019. Did he ever imagine he would serve in the board's highest leadership role? "No, no way," he said with a laugh. "I never would have imagined it."

As co-chair of the strategic planning committee, Petzold played a large role in helping to position the school to be forward-thinking and to prepare for the comprehensive fundraising campaign that ultimately became Our Common Bond. "The strategic plan and campaign were both very aspirational and deliberate, so it's been really rewarding to see how the community has come forward to support the school," he said. "I was very pleased to see the number of new donors who contributed. The investments that we've all made have put the school in an extraordinary position in terms of physical space, technological resources, and financial stability. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us just how vital those resources are."

They long ago lost track of how many collective hours they've spent volunteering at the school. "It became our full- and part-time jobs," said Wendy, "but I did love it. 'I loved being at school and seeing my kids in the halls, meeting parents of their classmates, helping with field trips, facilitating dances, and assisting with the kids' various activities. We got to work with great people, including other parents and also the amazing teachers, staff, and administrators.'"

Andrew and Wendy's myriad contributions to Our Common Bond, both in terms of time, talent, and treasure, were instrumental to the campaign's success. They are among the campaign's top leadership donors for their generous commitments to the Lubar Center for Innovation and Exploration, the USM Fund, and the endowment through their planned gift. Additionally, Andrew contributed hundreds of hours of energy and talent in guiding the construction process to its successful completion.

For Wendy and Andrew, their daughter, Grace's, graduation in 2019 was bittersweet (their son, Aaron, graduated in 2016). "Of course we'll be back to go shopping at Holiday Shops and be involved in that way, but it felt like a chapter of our lives ending," Wendy said. "We made lifelong friendships through our involvement, and I'm so glad we were both engaged at this level. It was a great opportunity—and an honor—to serve the school as others have before us." 🏰

**CAPITAL PROJECTS
ADDED OR RENOVATED
88,700
SQUARE FEET
OF THE SCHOOL BUILDING**



Carolyn and J.S. Stephens Live and Give Through Their Love of Liberal Arts



Carolyn and J.S. Stephens

Retired teacher and administrator John “J.S.” Stephens’ six-decade career at USM began inauspiciously. After graduating from Amherst College and earning his master’s in teaching from Harvard University in 1957, the Vermont native taught for one year at a public high school in Topsfield, Massachusetts. The experience left him underwhelmed, so he began to look for a job at an independent school. In 1958, he was contacted by Warren Seyfert, then-headmaster of Milwaukee Country Day School, which had an opening for a history teacher. Despite having never been to Milwaukee and not knowing a soul there, Stephens accepted. “I thought, ‘Oh what the heck, it’s only one year and they have a baseball team,’” he said. “It was a good decision, as it turned out.” J.S. has held numerous roles over the course of his USM career, including history teacher, economics teacher, director of admissions, head of Upper School, coach of the National Champion Federal Challenge team, as well as many other coaching and advising roles.

J.S. met his wife, Carolyn, during his first year at MCDS while she was studying English and theatre at Milwaukee Downer College. (USM’s predecessor school, Milwaukee Downer Seminary, was the high school division of MDC before it became an independent institution in 1910.) They married in 1961 and the first of their four children was born in 1963. Although neither J.S. nor Carolyn are from the area, the thought of leaving Milwaukee never persuaded them. “University School is so wonderful; why would we leave?” said Carolyn. “All four of our children were USM students from ages 3 to 18, and we were both very happy with our careers

and work.” Carolyn held a variety of careers, including managing the adult education program at Alverno College; executive director of the Milwaukee Ballet; running her own business; and teaching at Concordia University Wisconsin, while she earned her Ph.D. In the 1970s, Carolyn spearheaded the efforts to preserve the Milwaukee Downer College and Seminary buildings by completing the process of having them listed in the National Register of Historic Places, thus saving them from demolition.

As J.S. and Carolyn approached their retirement years and beyond, they began thinking about how they could give back to their alma maters that shaped their lives and which they valued.

“When we started examining our lives, we felt that liberal arts education is what we’ve worked for all our lives, and that developed our deep roots at USM and Milwaukee Downer College,” said Carolyn. Working with USM’s planned giving advisor, J.S. and Carolyn established a charitable remainder uni-trust (CRUT) to support their four children while also benefiting USM and three liberal arts universities, as well as their church. Upon maturation, the Stephens’ gift will establish an endowed fund that will provide a new scholarship for qualifying Upper School students. Two other funds named in honor of J.S. are already in existence at USM, established through the generosity of other community members. One is a full-tuition scholarship and the other supports professional development for faculty.

“We feel that by supporting these causes, while supporting our children—three of whom teach at independent schools—our influence can continue long after we’re gone,” said J.S. “We will help fund the schools, the schools (and our children) will educate future students, and those students will go forth and bring light to the world. That’s how we will spread our message.” 🏛️



**41 GIFTS
TO THE
ENDOWMENT**

including 14 for newly established named, endowed funds

Our Common Bond

Together, we raised a total of \$30,673,264—114% of our campaign goal!

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101
FIRST TIME
CAMPAIGN
DONORS

YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS
TO THE CAMPAIGN RAISED
\$30.67M
FOR OCB PRIORITIES

      
207 FAMILIES
INVESTED IN THE CAMPAIGN
WITH A MULTI-YEAR PLEDGE

Campaign Investors

Thank you to all the investors who made their best gifts to the campaign.

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**Deceased*

58 COMMITMENTS
OVER
\$100K



34% 
OF INVESTORS ARE ALUMNI

“A Gift That I Can Never Repay”



Mary Bechmann '75 with her mother, Mary Bechmann Sr.

When Mary Bechmann '75 was in 3rd grade at University School of Milwaukee, life took an unexpected turn. Her father, a physician at St. Luke's Hospital and World War II veteran, died unexpectedly—leaving her mother to raise Mary singlehandedly. For a widow in the 1960s with a high school education in stenography, that was no small task.

Add the fact that the Bechmanns lived on the south side of Milwaukee (Bay View and later South Milwaukee), and their challenging circumstances quickly became a test of perseverance and grit. Yet having her daughter remain at USM, where Mary had been since nursery school, became her mother's top priority, even if it meant driving to campus twice daily for many years. “It was very important to me and my husband that Mary get a first-class education,” said her mother. “We sent her to USM because it was the best school—and I dearly wanted her to have a better life than I had.”

Adds Mary, “Both of my parents had an immigrant mindset—the deeply-held belief that education is the only way to get a head start and is the key to everything in life. My father was an immigrant who became a successful physician and my maternal grandparents,

also immigrants, shared the view that education is the greatest gift one can ever receive.”

Bechmann considers her USM experience to be somewhat atypical compared to that of her classmates. “I was from a relatively modest single-parent household on the other side of town, didn't play sports and wasn't involved in many of the social aspects of daily life at USM,” she says. “But when I look back on those 15 years, they were truly foundational—not only by exposing me to a much larger worldview and challenging me to level up, but by giving me the skills, confidence, and audacity to think that a young person like me could succeed in the Ivy League and beyond. USM supported me in so many ways—the incredible teachers dared me to believe in myself and take advantage of all that the school offered. By showing me what was possible, USM created the base for everything that's come since in my life.”

After graduating, Mary earned a bachelor's degree from Princeton University in 1979 followed by an MBA from Stanford University in 1985, going on to lead a successful career as one of the first women in venture capital and private equity. She's lived in Silicon Valley for most of the last 37 years and is now active in philanthropy and private investing.

Bechmann found herself remembering her days at USM after returning to Milwaukee to care for her mother, who recently turned 104. “Coming home to Milwaukee reinforced for me how fortunate I was to have parents who emphasized education. My mother's many sacrifices and intense desire to give me the tools and experience to have (as she put it), ‘a better life’ truly changed the course of my life. It's a gift that I can never repay.”

Bechmann and her mother know they were both equally fortunate to find a school that matched those values. As Mary said, “The time was right to acknowledge my roots and honor the incredible foundation which USM provided by making a gift to the Our Common Bond campaign. My 15 years at USM had an intense impact that was unique, powerful, and unparalleled. Through this gift, my hope is to encourage and embolden the next generation of students who are fortunate enough to have parents who care so deeply about the value of a USM education.” 🏰

Team Involvement Yields Success



From left: Laine '21, Nancy, Jim, Patrick '18, and Evan '19 Bolton.

Jim and Nancy Bolton had a cardinal rule when their three children—Patrick '18, Evan '19, and Laine '21—were young: to play on a team. “Jim and I both feel it’s very important for children to be involved on a team,” said Nancy. “We didn’t care if it was the chess team or the football team, as long as they were involved in something. They learn about competition, discipline, and winning and losing, and those are all things that carry over into everyday life.” All three Bolton children have been involved in USM athletics, as has Nancy, who served as president of the Wildcat Booster Club, among many other volunteer roles at the school.

Education has always been important to Jim and Nancy. “Jim’s parents and mine were educators. We benefitted from their focus on the importance of education, which is partly why we chose USM for our kids. They have taken full advantage of the many opportunities at USM, from learning how to write a resume and participating in the Internship and Shadowing Program to international trips.”

For Jim and Nancy, supporting the Our Common Bond campaign meant supporting both the USM Fund and the endowment for financial assistance. “We feel that our children really benefitted from their USM education, and education is very important to both of us. We knew that we wanted to support financial assistance for other students, that’s where we wanted to focus our giving.”

Nancy’s extensive volunteer work through the Booster Club enabled her to get a behind-the-scenes look at school, but she didn’t have to look far to see the value of a USM education. “We’ve seen in our kids the ability to advocate for themselves, to get their work done independently, and to structure their studying effectively. They’ve gained so much from their USM education.” 🏰

Parents’ Association Lifts School Community

Beginning with our predecessor schools and continuing today, University School of Milwaukee’s parent community plays a vital role in the success of our school. USM’s Parents’ Association (PA) organizes numerous events and initiatives to strengthen community and generate financial support for the betterment of our school.

The PA’s contributions of time, talent, and treasure build community while funding mission-focused enhancements through the annual allocations process they complete alongside the administration. Annually, these funds support a number of campus improvement projects, and additional PA revenue is typically allocated to the school through a gift to the USM Fund and the USM Parents’ Association Endowed Fund for Faculty Compensation. Historically, the PA has made collective gifts to support the school’s capital campaigns. This tradition continued in 2016 when the Parents’ Association made a leadership contribution to Our Common Bond. Their gift is recognized with the naming of the new elevator, which is located in the Upper School entrance.

“It was a collaborative effort with input from past and present PA leadership,” said Margy Stratton ’84, who was PA president in 2017. “We thought it was nice to have the Parents’ Association represented as a campaign investor, so people are aware that any funds raised by the PA go right back to the students, the teachers, and the school community.”

USM students, faculty, and staff are fortunate to benefit from the wonderful dedication of the Parents’ Association and the numerous enhancements they support. 🏰

22% 
OF INVESTORS ARE PARENTS

USM Fund is Campaign's Single Largest Donor



Thank you to you and all donors who supported the USM Fund during the Our Common Bond campaign. Over the last five years, we came together with annual gifts for the USM Fund resulting in the largest cumulative gift to the campaign: \$6.8 million. This collective gift from our community of donors contributed significantly to the campaign's \$30 million-plus overall total as well as the school's excellence year after year.

Support of the USM Fund demonstrates the loyalty, commitment, and generous spirit of our USM community, and advances the school's mission.

Through the generosity of parents, alumni, parents of alumni, grandparents, faculty, staff, and other friends, the USM Fund supports all that defines USM's excellence and strength of community, and serves as a catalyst for the remarkable opportunities, unique programs, and student-faculty collaborations that happen every day.

The USM Fund is truly our common bond, both during the campaign and always. We are grateful for the support of the entire school community.



Visit www.USMOurCommonBond.org/USMFundDonors for a full list of donors who supported the USM Fund during the campaign.



LARGEST COLLECTIVE GIFT
From all 2,105 USM Fund donors between
7/1/15 and 6/30/20