



Significance

CHANGING THE WORLD THROUGH CHARITABLE GIFT PLANNING



Myrlene Sparks: Investing deeply in others

Everywhere you look in Myrlene Sparks' Burien home are signs of her nurturing abilities. Dozens of finicky African violets are in bloom. A colorful plot of dahlias in the backyard have grown taller than she is. And the family photos — of a long-ago wedding day, of smiling children and grandchildren — reveal relationships well-tended.

Myrlene has deep roots in her church, her community, and with Seattle Pacific. She and her husband, George '54, were married for 33 years before he passed away in 2000. They raised their family — son Kyle '90 and daughter Kelli Sparks Panchenko '94 — in the same rambler where she still lives.

A spry 87 years old, Myrlene mows her own lawn, drives, and stays alert for opportunities to help wherever she's needed. "It broadens your scope of life when you touch the lives of others," she says. "As long as God gives me strength, keeping going is so important."

As part of her investment in young people, she set up a gift annuity with SPU in 2016. A gift annuity is a contract between SPU and a donor in which a donor transfers cash or property and receives a tax deduction and a guaranteed stream of annual income for life.

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REFLECTIONS



The beginning of a new school year and the launch of a new brand expression are a good time to reflect on who we are as an institution and the mission to which God has called us. At our recent opening convocation at First Free Methodist

Church, representatives from our faculty and staff reminded us that Seattle Pacific University is historically orthodox, clearly evangelical, distinctively Wesleyan, and genuinely ecumenical.

After these affirmations were presented, the congregation of students, faculty, and staff united in their response. “We commit ourselves to this faith, and to these shaping influences that define our community of faith, and we pledge ourselves, with humility and conviction, to live as best we know how in loving relationship with Jesus Christ and in faithful service to others. This we believe to be the defining center of our lives and the guiding aspiration of our life in community at Seattle Pacific University.”

We also acknowledge who we are through our new branding. Seattle Pacific offers a unique learning experience that combines faith, academics, and what we call the “Seattle advantage.” Our students can explore, or go deeper in, their Christian faith. They can anticipate and shape the future, see the world with compassion, experience academic rigor, and study in a global epicenter. It’s an exciting time to be at SPU!

Blessings,

Marlon Sandlin
Director of Endowments and Gift Planning
206-281-2257
msandlin@spu.edu

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“I’m on a fixed income,” Myrlene says, “and you never know when you might need a little extra. It’s comforting to have that income as a little nest egg. SPU deposits it every six months, so I know there’s some there if I need it.

“I don’t know how long I’m going to live or how long my funds need to last. Because of George’s good planning, I am able to give, even in my senior years. God has been very good to me, and I’ve been able to release fears of having enough,” she says. “Rather than leave it in my will for the kids to take care of when I’m gone, I’m taking care of my giving while I’m here and able to keep track of what’s happening.”

Supporting higher education pays homage to her late husband’s values, too. After earning his education degree at SPU, he became an elementary school teacher and later a principal, working for the Highline School District for 31 years.

“My husband couldn’t afford college,” Myrlene says. “but he worked hard and did it because he wanted to be a teacher. George wanted to be a part of getting kids ready for their future. Children loved him. My kids and husband all got good educations at SPU, and since we come from an educational community, I want to support what we believe in.”

Supporting SPU took the form of cheering on the men’s basketball team for over three decades for the Sparks family — including their young children and George’s brother, John ’40, and sister-in-law Imo Rowe Sparks ’40. As season ticket holders, Myrlene fondly recalls seeing friends in the bleachers and sipping coffee while getting a game report during halftime in the Falcon Club. A high school football and basketball coach, John was a strong supporter of college athletics, and he and Imo established an athletic endowment at SPU.

Myrlene likes to recount George’s tale of wanting to be one of the first to sleep in Royal Brougham Pavilion while it was still under construction during his undergrad years. He and his friends grabbed sleeping bags and snuck in one night — mission accomplished!

When Myrlene moved to the Northwest from her home state of Minnesota, she and George met at the Burien Free Methodist Church, where it was hard to miss each other. “We were practically the only singles,” she recalls.



After they had children, Myrlene became a stay-at-home mom. “That was very important to me, and George was very supportive,” she says. “He always said that by my being home, it extended the ministry of our home because I had the time to be involved in other ministries.”

Myrlene threw herself into school activities like PTA and countless church ministries: coordinating weddings, fellowships, and after-funeral receptions, arranging flowers for the sanctuary every Sunday, and maintaining the church grounds (a role she finally quit at 82). Today, she attends Highline Christian Church, where she continues to be involved with greeting congregants, bringing flowers for the welcome center, attending Bible studies, and serving on the prayer team.

It’s an understatement when she says, “I’m not one who feels I can belong and not participate. If we belong to God’s family, we have a responsibility. As long as I have breath, I will find a place to serve.”

For the past nine years, Myrlene has convened a special group of women in her home each month. Dubbed the “Gals” (“God’s amazing love sustains”), she offers fellowship to single women like herself. “You leave your troubles at the door and we have fun together,” she says. “The laughter gets rather loud sometimes!”

In addition to nurturing her three grandchildren, who range in age from 12 to 22, Myrlene has a foster grandson and is an “adopted” grandmother to others.

It’s all part of her character: “When I was a teenager, the youth motto at church was ‘others,’ and I decided, ‘You know, that’s a good motto for life.’ I have strived to be supportive of others, to give, to help, to encourage — I don’t know any other way.”

PHILANTHROPY SPOTLIGHT



DICK HEDGES’ Lifetime commitment to Seattle Pacific

Like many of our alums, Richard “Dick” Hedges ’57 had a multifaceted relationship with Seattle Pacific over his lifetime. In addition to his academic pursuits, he was a star athlete in track and field and on the men’s basketball team. He also served in student leadership as vice president of finance with the ASSP.

In later years, he served on the Alumni Board. Dick loved SPU. His personal involvement and years of financial support were a direct reflection of his commitment to his alma mater.



Mary Charleson: Leading with compassion

Pure grit. It’s a critical ingredient for a runner, says Mary Charleson. And it’s what

propelled the 2018 Seattle Pacific University graduate and track and cross country star to qualify for nationals five times, to receive five All-West Region awards and six GNAC all-academic awards, to twice be named All-American, and to contribute to six GNAC team championship titles.

The effort taught the Washington native many life lessons: “I can do so much more than I think I’m capable of. Living out your passions requires not only heart but a whole lot of self-discipline,” she says. “And running taught me the value of a support system, of knowing those people in your life who will be there for you.”

That support system included SPU running marvel and two-time Olympian Doris Brown Heritage ’64. Not only did Mary receive Doris’ eponymous scholarship to support her academic and athletic endeavors, she had a special relationship with the former SPU coach. “She prayed for me before races and always reminded me to run for the pure joy of it,” says Mary. “Doris is just as successful as she is kind. She gave me a lot of encouragement in my time at SPU.

“I’ve heard some say that you have to sacrifice a lot of the college experience to be an athlete. I couldn’t disagree more — whether I was running or studying, I was always investing time in something I loved.”

Mary’s drive to succeed went beyond the track and trail. A psychology major, she was on a research team under Assistant Professor of Psychology Brittany Tausen. She conducted social cognitive studies, contributed to journal articles, and presented findings at research conferences. She also volunteered at a local homeless shelter for young adults. Mary earned her department’s highest honor, the Philip Ashton Award, for her impact.

Her interest in mental health care led Mary to intern at Seattle Children’s Psychiatry and Behavioral Medicine Unit the summer before her senior year. She shadowed pediatric mental health specialists who teach young patients how to regulate their emotions and tolerate distress. She conducted emotion coaching sessions and practiced behavioral charting of patients. Mary loved the work and adores children, so she applied to become a pediatric mental health specialist herself and was hired in June.

“There is so much unwarranted stigma regarding mental illness, and I hope that my work in this field will help fight against it,” she says. “I love the moments when I can get a smile, a laugh, or a meaningful conversation with a child who is going through a really difficult time. It’s a constant learning curve — every case is different, and what helps one child may not help another. Every day I am challenged to be flexible, think on my feet, and be artful in my interactions.”

While Mary was investing in children, her parents, Dave and Cindy, looked for a way to give back to the athletic programs so formational in their daughter’s life. SPU’s men’s cross country and track teams are small compared to other GNAC men’s programs and receive less financial support. The Charlesons funded an endowment in Doris Heritage’s name to support the recruitment and financial support of male distance athletes.

For Mary, the future likely holds graduate school (like brother John, who’s working on his doctorate at SPU) and the dream of a marathon in Switzerland or Italy. But right now she’s focused on her work at Children’s: “I love empowering others while using my gifts of compassion and curiosity. I think God has gifted me with the ability to care deeply for those who are different from me.”



Professionally, Dick trained to serve as a secondary school teacher and counselor. For a period of time, he even worked at Seattle Pacific as director of guidance. Later, after receiving his doctorate at the University of Washington, Dick worked in private practice as a psychologist and counselor until his retirement.

Over his career, Dick understood the importance of having necessary materials and resources available for study and research, especially in the context of higher education. In 2007, at the

encouragement of his good friend Bryce Nelson, then Seattle Pacific librarian, Dick established the Friends of the Seattle Pacific University Library Endowment to provide students attending SPU with additional library resources and services that are needed to complement their education while attending the University. Dick’s initial gift, and gifts from many others to this fund — now valued at over \$200,000 — currently provides much-needed supplemental support for the SPU Library.

When Dick passed away last year, he also left a

final gift to the University through his will to further support this important fund. We are grateful for Dick Hedges and all of our friends and supporters who invest in the future of Seattle Pacific University through their gifts to endowments.

Photo: Brothers Jim '60 (left) and Dick '57 Hedges.

NATIONALLY RANKED — SPU is the only private university in the Pacific Northwest to make *U.S. News & World Report's* 2019 “Best National University” list.



As part of CityQuest, more than 400 students, faculty, and staff spent their day working on service projects at 20 different organizations throughout Seattle.

Provide yourself with a personal pension plan

A Charitable Gift Annuity can provide you with supplemental income and also support SPU students. Benefits include:

- Fixed income for life. You can’t outlive your payments!
- A plan that works hand in hand with Social Security (like pensions have historically).
- Payments guaranteed by Seattle Pacific University.
- An immediate income-tax deduction.
- Partially tax-free income payments.
- One-Life or Two-Life Gift Annuities available.
- Current payments for ages 65 and older; deferred payments for ages 55 to 64.

Sample Current Gift Annuity Rates:

One-Life	Two-Life
Age 65 – 5.1%	Ages 65/65 – 4.5%
Age 70 – 5.6%	Ages 70/70 – 5.0%
Age 75 – 6.2%	Ages 75/75 – 5.5%
Age 80 – 7.3%	Ages 80/80 – 6.2%
Age 85 – 8.3%	Ages 85/85 – 7.3%

To learn more about Gift Annuities, please contact Marlon Sandlin at 206-281-2257, msandlin@spu.edu, or visit our website at legacy.spu.edu/giftannuities.



Planning to create or update your will?
We can help! Our FREE booklet *Planning Your Legacy — a Christian Guide to Providing for Your Family and Supporting the Causes You Care About* will assist you in designing the perfect estate plan. Request your copy today at legacy.spu.edu/estateplanningguide.

Spotlight on new endowments

We are grateful for friends who invest in the lives of current and future SPU students by creating scholarship endowments. The following are some of our recently established endowments:

Glenn Joy and Donna Canuel Joy Scholarship Endowment – Providing scholarships for undergraduate students majoring in the academic program area of philosophy.

Lillian P. Danielson Memorial Scholarship Endowment (established through the estate of Marshall and Muriel Adams) – Providing scholarships for undergraduate or graduate students attending the University.

Joy D. and Edward A. Staley Scholarship Endowment – Providing scholarships or fellowships to graduate students in the academic program area of clinical psychology.

Chi-Keung and Pui-King Wong Asian American Ministry Scholarship Endowment – Providing scholarships for graduate students with financial need studying in the Asian American Ministry program of Seattle Pacific Seminary.

Charleson Family Honorary Doris Heritage Cross Country Scholarship Endowment – Providing scholarships for male student-athletes who are members of the Seattle Pacific cross country team.

To learn more about creating an endowment, please contact Marlon Sandlin at 206-281-2257, msandlin@spu.edu, or visit our website at legacy.spu.edu/endowments.



Dave (left) and Cindy (right) Charleson funded an endowment for SPU's male distance runners.