

Quarterly Donor Spotlight

Autumn 2019

Donna Higgins Parry began looking at colleges as a high school student. When one of her friends returned home to Nitro, West Virginia, for the weekend from Marshall University, she told Donna about the walkable campus, small class size and friendliness of the Marshall Family. Interested in what the university could offer, Donna went to spend a weekend with her friend and knew Marshall was the right fit for her.

Obtaining a Bachelor of Arts in journalism and a Master of Arts in counseling Donna was active in many areas at the university. She played on the women's basketball teams, was instrumental at *The Parthenon*, worked as a resident advisor and served as a member of the journalism honorary fraternity, Sigma Delta Chi. She helped bring the national conference of Sigma Delta Chi to Huntington. Her favorite memories were attending football games with her friends and working at *The Parthenon*.

"Through all of these activities, I learned how to be a part of a team to get things done and I learned how to step up and be a leader. These are traits I depended on daily during my Air Force career and it all started at Marshall," said Donna.

After completing her master's degree, Donna moved to California with her sister and looked for a job. She returned to West Virginia after six months, and due to the tough job market, she joined the United States Air Force.

"My plan was to stay four years. I ended up staying 21. I guess you could say I liked it," she said.

Donna worked as an aircraft maintenance officer, but also taught Air Force ROTC in Western Pennsylvania. Her maintenance assignments took her to Delaware, New Mexico, California (twice), Iceland and the Pentagon.

"Part of the reason I joined the Air Force was to see the world outside of West Virginia. I have now traveled to all seven continents," said Donna, an avid photographer whose skill developed as a journalism student. "More than just to travel is the challenge to capture the sense of place with my photography. I try to bring back a bit of what I've seen and experienced. I just returned from a three week photo tour in India."

A supporter of Global Horizons, which provides Marshall students the opportunity to study abroad, Donna recalls being amazed when she learned of this initiative because she knew how much she learned on a trip to New York City with the Model UN.



Pictured: Donna Higgins Parry holding the article she wrote as a student about the Model UN during a campus visit last March.

“I think it is important to understand just how big the world is and, at the same time, we are all very much alike. Nothing does that like travel,” she explained. “Understanding the complexities of the world and also the simple things, seeing it firsthand, opens the heart to new ideas. It is the key to the future.”

She explained that her reason for giving is so that others can have a wonderful Marshall experience and to open the door for new generations. She urged students to value where they came from and reach out to find their full potential.

“Treat everyone equally and value where they came from and their potential. Then turn around and extend a hand to those coming behind you. Pull someone up with you,” she encouraged.

“My hope for Marshall is to continue to rise!”