

# Planned Giving Quarterly

## Donor Spotlight

Summer 2021

“My time as a Marshall undergraduate student was such a pivotal moment in my life. I never stop thinking about what I learned about life at Marshall and want to make sure to do what I can do each year to give students the same opportunities I have had,” said Marshall alumna and loyal donor Marti Knisley.

Choosing to attend Marshall because it was close to her home, Marti also pursued Marshall because of its affordability and the opportunity to take on new challenges while meeting new friends. The Ohio native completed her Bachelor of Arts in rehabilitation counseling in 1970. Upon graduation, Marti enrolled at the Ohio State University and obtained her master’s in rehabilitation counseling.



After working for 13-years as a service provider in a community mental health center, Marti shifted to mental health administration, serving as deputy and then director of the Ohio Department of Mental Health, commissioner of mental health in Pennsylvania and the first director of the Department of Mental Health in the District of Columbia.

“Following my career in state and local government, I continued my work to help improve mental health and disability services working and consulting with federal and state agencies. This led to my appointment as Federal Court Monitor and Reviewer in three states that were required to reform their mental health systems,” said Marti, who says she learned so much at Marshall that she cannot choose one thing that best prepared her for her career.

As a student, Marti accepted summer jobs and leadership roles in Student Government as the Student Government Affairs Commissioner (similar to today’s Student Life Chair), in which she was responsible for managing Homecoming. Marti is grateful for the ways Marshall helped her grow personally and professionally. She also was elected to managing Homecoming during her senior year. Marti was a member of Delta Zeta, a sorority, where she served as vice president, and a member of the Panhellenic Council, and was offered the chance to participate in the design of the new Student Union that was built after she graduated.

“I loved the old Shawkey Student Union, but we were outgrowing it in many different ways. In that role, I also helped plan the Artists Services and booking campus concerts,” Marti explained, who recalls frequent visits to Shawkey as it was a popular gathering spot. “But Old Main was my favorite spot. Its history, especially. It really made the campus a special place.”

---

"I met so many students who came to the university with hopes and dreams, many from struggling families or as the first in their family to go to college and they have gone on to have successful and fulfilling lives. I want every student coming from our corner of the world to get the opportunity of a great Marshall education."

---

"Marti recalls how the Marshall football team only won four games during her academic career- two her freshman year and two her senior year. She fondly recalls the friends she made and the professors with whom she bonded and feeling shattered when she learned of the tragic plane crash the fall after her graduation. It is an event she still thinks about often.

Because of Marti's time at Marshall and the way her education prepared her for her career, it is her hope that any student who wants to attend Marshall University can. This is one reason she has given annually to Marshall University's Annual Fund for four decades and has chosen to remember Marshall University through a legacy gift.

"I met so many students who came to the university with hopes and dreams, many from struggling families or as the first in their family to go to college and they have gone on to have successful and fulfilling lives. I want every student coming from our corner of the world to get the opportunity of a great Marshall education. I have a number of family members who are educators, so I direct my gift to educators, as it feels like giving back for the opportunity they gave me and what Marshall gave me that I will never forget," said Marti, who said her planned gift is just one more way to give back.

She encourages today's students to make the most of their time at Marshall, get involved and study hard. Marti hopes the next generation can "solve the big problems still facing us in health care, our justice system, education and community life" and for the Marshall University men's soccer team to continue winning NCAA Championships.

"My hope for Marshall University is already beginning to be realized when I see the university's growth and commitment to its students and the region," Marti said. "I hope the university follows this path to succeed and continues to help future generations excel."

Marti now resides in North Carolina, where she enjoys walking, thanks to two active dogs, and reading. She loves to travel with friends and family and has spent the past year learning all about Zoom.