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Belief in Lifelong Learning Inspires Gift

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Belief in Lifelong Learning Inspires Gift

Stewarts establish endowment for UM School of Education

JUNE 30, 2019 BY MARY STANTON KNIGHT

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Mike and Cathy Stewart's time is devoted to their business, Wildrose Kennels, the oldest trainer and breeder of imported British and Irish Labrador dogs in North America. Photo by Bill Dabney/UM Foundation

OXFORD, Miss. – Mike Stewart has been an entrepreneur since age 16, when he began working in a clothing store and making sales presentations as part of a high school internship program. His wife, Cathy, has been a nurturer of other people from all walks of life from an early stage, which led her to becoming an elementary teacher.

A convergence of Mike's and Cathy's traits and a lifetime of hard work have led to the largest gift commitment ever from an alumna of the University of Mississippi School of Education alumna.

Mike and Cathy Stewart believe passionately in encouraging literacy and lifelong learners and have committed an estimated \$500,000 in their will from their assets to the School of Education to reward teachers who share their devotion to promoting reading.

"Reading is the key to success in so many areas," said Cathy Stewart, a retired teacher and Oxford native. "If students are avid readers, they can find books on whatever subject interests them and learn about that subject."

For Stewart, who established the World Class Teaching Program at Ole Miss and was active in the National Board Certification Mentoring Program, giving back to the university through the education school was a natural decision.

"Mike and I hope some of our success will help others become great teachers and love what they do as much as I enjoyed being a teacher," she said. "I hope this endowment rewards those who have a passion to ensure kids become lifelong learners."

The donors have strong ties to the Lafayette County-Oxford-University community. Mike Stewart served as chief of the University Police Department for more than 18 years, while Cathy Stewart taught first and second grade for 20 years in the Lafayette County School District and served as an adjunct instructor at the School of Education for four years.

For the past 20 years, the couple's time has been devoted to their business, Wildrose Kennels, the oldest trainer and breeder of imported British and Irish Labrador dogs in North America. The thriving business recently expanded to Dallas and Hillsborough, North Carolina.

"Mike and I don't have any children, so we want to support things that made us successful and happy in life, and my school work certainly did that for me," said Cathy Stewart, who completed her undergraduate, master's and doctoral degrees at UM in elementary education. Mike received his

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Campus Briefs

Civil Engineering Professor Receives Most-Cited Paper Award

OXFORD, Miss. – Peer recognition is a rewarding experience for anyone, but University of Mississippi researcher Amir Mehrara Molan was elated when an article he co-authored recently received the Most Cited Paper Award at the 102nd Transportation Research Board meeting in the nation's capital. The International Journal of Transportation Science and Technology presented the civil engineering

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Young Alumna Gives Back to School of Accountancy

OXFORD, Miss. – Stephanie Jennings Teague, of Chicago, sees her commitment of \$100,000 to the Patterson School of Accountancy's new building at the University of Mississippi as a means of saying "thank you." "It is a way to show a small token of my appreciation to Ole Miss, the faculty and staff, and the accounting

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Reuters: Keep an Eye on the Money Supply

U.S. inflation roller coaster prompts fresh look at long-ignored money supply By Michael S. Derby NEW YORK – The amount of money sloshing around the U.S. economy shrank last year for the first time on record, a development that some economists believe bolsters the case for U.S. inflation pressures continuing to

bachelor's in public administration and master's in criminal justice.

"The reason I pursued my graduate degrees was to become more proficient at what I was doing and answer questions I had about how to improve kids' reading skills," said Stewart, who earned her National Board Certification in teaching a year after completing her doctorate.

The planned gift will establish endowments for three areas: the Dr. Cathy Ward Stewart Literacy and Lifelong Learning Scholarship, the Dr. Cathy Ward Stewart Outstanding Literacy Teacher of the Year Award and the School of Education Academic Enhancement Endowment.

The scholarship endowment will provide four scholarships a year for Mississippi students who plan to teach in the state, with first preference given to community college transfer students. Two scholarships will be annually awarded to elementary educators teaching in the state and pursuing graduate degrees.

The annual teacher award will honor a of Education graduate or a teacher enrolled in a graduate program. The school's award committee will select the winner from applications that include a description of creative ways to teach literacy and/or encourage lifelong learning. The recipient will receive funds to buy books for his or her students to read.

"I spent a lot of out-of-pocket money to buy children's books to complete thematic units," said Stewart, who devoted her teaching career to younger students. "With both the scholarship and the award, Mike and I want to support future teachers who feel a calling and have a passion to pursue degrees.

"For me, first grade was the most rewarding because the students are learning something new every day, and you could just see it on their faces. It's also one of the most crucial times in children's lives. If you can encourage their love of reading, the difference will be seen all the way through their lives."

The gift will have a meaningful and lasting impact, said David Rock, dean of the School of Education.

"Mike and Cathy are extraordinary Ole Miss graduates, who have served the university and the local community in their first careers and then have achieved on a national and international stage as business leaders," Rock said.

"As an educator, Cathy is one of the School of Education's most significant teachers and leaders. Her professional impact on countless students and teachers is worthy of emulation by the next generation of educators."

Cathy Stewart chose early in her life to go into education. Mike has excelled as an entrepreneur as both an innovative law enforcement leader and businessman.

"I decided at age 6 that I wanted to be a teacher and never looked back. To me, it was a calling, and I loved every day that I was in the classroom."

Their financial gift mirrors their work success and dedication to excellence as educators and entrepreneurs. Their legacy will be to influence the lives of others forever.

To make a gift to the Dr. Cathy Ward Stewart Endowment for Literacy and Lifelong Learning, mail a check, with the fund's name noted in the memo line, to the University of Mississippi Foundation, 406 University Ave., Oxford, MS 38655; or online at <https://give.olemiss.edu>.

For more information on supporting the School of Education, contact Billy Crews at wlcrows@olemiss.edu or 662-915-2836.

To learn more about including the university in a will or other estate plans, contact Byron Liles, senior director of gift planning, at byron@olemiss.edu or 662-915-7601.

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