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Bill Dabney

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Gift Supports UM Liberal Arts Faculty

Growing Ole Miss family inspires Morgans' gift

JANUARY 6, 2018 BY **BILL DABNEY**

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The home that Kirk and Shelly Morgan purchased in Oxford has kept them connected with campus and friends, renewed their love for the area and provided an excuse to visit. The whole family often meets here to enjoy Rebel sports and all that Ole Miss and Oxford have to offer. Photo by Bill Dabney/UM Foundation

OXFORD, Miss. – Kirk and Shelly Morgan of Lexington, South Carolina, say their recent gift to the University of Mississippi's **College of Liberal Arts** is, in a sense, simply supporting their family.

"Our Ole Miss family just gets bigger," said Kirk Morgan, a native of Charleston, South Carolina, who knew no one when he arrived at UM his freshman year. But the relationships he formed on campus and beyond have inspired his desire to give back by establishing the Shelly and Kirk Morgan Fund for Faculty Excellence.

"All of these relationships stem from my graduation from the College of Liberal Arts," said Morgan, a 1980 graduate with a bachelor's degree in political science.

During his sophomore year, Morgan met his wife, Shelly Stefoniak, a Dallas native who earned a bachelor's degree in education in 1981.

"I have been fortunate enough to realize that Ole Miss is as much an important factor in our entire family's lives as any other group deserving of support," he said. "I am hopeful that the College of Liberal Arts can utilize our financial assistance to continue improving the faculty and facilities and encourage other young students to attend.

"I have particularly enjoyed the fact that, like our family, many out-of-state students attend Ole Miss."

The Shelly and Kirk Morgan Fund for Faculty Excellence supports the recognition of outstanding teaching, scholarship and service by a faculty member within the College of Liberal Arts as deemed appropriate by the dean.

"The Morgans' generous gift is a testament to how much they care for the quality of instruction at the University of Mississippi as well as their desire to ensure that Ole Miss students continue to receive the very best higher education has to offer," liberal arts Dean Lee Cohen said. "Their gift will have a significant impact for years to come."

Besides meeting his wife on campus, Morgan's ties to Ole Miss include an uncle, John Gainey, a former All-American Rebel baseball player.

"He encouraged me to visit Ole Miss to meet the coach so that I might get an invitation to join the team, which I got," said Morgan, who also lettered in golf his sophomore year.

Family ties continued as both of the Morgans' sons, Eddie and Sam, became UM graduates, as well as Eddie's wife, Alaina McClain-Morgan of Houston, Texas.

And one person in particular is like family to the Morgans, even though she's not a blood relative. Linda Spargo, coordinator of special projects in the chancellor's office, became a friend and trusted educational counselor to both Eddie and Sam. Additionally, Spargo remained "on call" for the family when Eddie and Alaina were seriously injured in a car wreck their junior year.

"During Eddie's convalescence, the support, friendship and practical advice we received from Dr. Linda Spargo was a prime motivation in my realization that Ole Miss was not just a great school but also a family," Morgan said.

After graduating from Ole Miss, Morgan remained on campus for his first year of law school while his wife finished her senior year and graduated. They transferred to South Carolina, where he finished law

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Campus Briefs

Donations Sought for 25th Annual Books and Bears Program

OXFORD, Miss. – The University of Mississippi is asking the community to help spread a little joy this holiday season by donating to the 25th annual Books and Bears program. Donations such as toys, books, dolls, bicycles and other children's play items are being accepted through Dec. 14. All donations will be collected and sorted

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Thank You To Our Donors

Mississippi Excellence in Coaching Fellowship Aims to Build Leaders

OXFORD, Miss. – Twenty-five inaugural recipients of the Mississippi Excellence in Coaching Fellowship – a program hosted by the University of Mississippi School of Education in partnership with the Mississippi Association of Coaches and the Mississippi High School Activities Association – are expected to increase their impact on student-athletes and their communities. The coaching fellowship

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Ole Miss In the News

Clarion-Ledger: New Essay Collection Tells the Story of Meredith's Enrollment

Essays celebrate 60th anniversary of James Meredith's enrollment at University of Mississippi By Lauren Rhoades Oct. 1 marks the 60th anniversary of James Meredith's 1962 enrollment at the University of Mississippi as the school's first African-American student.

school, then worked briefly in Dallas before returning to South Carolina, where Morgan has practiced as a trial lawyer ever since.

He recently served as president of the South Carolina Trial Lawyers Association among other achievements.

Morgan found great value in his final year as a student in Oxford.

"We made many great friends who remain so today and are a big part of our continued involvement and commitment to Ole Miss," he said. "We look forward to continuing our support of the College of Liberal Arts for the balance of our lives, to enjoying many new relationships and friends made as a consequence of our gift, and to watching the College of Liberal Arts have an impact on the lives of faculty and students because of this gift.

"It's a chance for us to return the favor and make a difference in our university. We want to be a part of its future successes."

Nikki Neely Davis, a UM development director, thanked the Morgans for their gift.

"We appreciate so much their vision in making this type of gift," she said. "While scholarship endowments are crucial, endowments that provide support for faculty and programs are equally important to supporting the university's future.

"The Morgans are gracious and generous people whom I've greatly enjoyed getting to know."

The Shelly and Kirk Morgan Fund for Faculty Excellence is open to gifts from individuals and organizations. To contribute, send checks with the endowment name noted in the memo line to the University of Mississippi Foundation, 406 University Ave., Oxford, MS 38655; visit <http://www.umfoundation.com/makeagift>; or contact Davis at nlneely@olemiss.edu or 662-915-6678.

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"James Meredith: Breaking the Barrier," a collection of essays edited by UM professor of journalism Kathleen Wickham, honors this historic milestone with

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