

ENSURING A SPACE FOR DISCOVERY AND CONNECTION

For nearly 50 years, Gustavus Library Associates—Friends of the Library have helped make Folke Bernadotte Memorial Library an essential part of the Gustavus student experience. Longtime board member Susan Engelsma Wilcox '73 and current president Ava Goepfert '14 discuss the work of GLA.

How did the Friends of the Library begin?

SUSAN: The founder was Patty Lindell, wife of former President Ed Lindell. Patty recognized that Gustavus needed to bring the library to the standards of a Phi Beta Kappa member institution. She gathered a group of women—one of whom was my mom, Fran—and they started meeting with different groups to build support for the library. Soon after, these women began to organize events to raise funds. For instance, the first time A Royal Affair was held was 1978.

This is around the time I became involved. When I was a student, I helped carry books from the old library to the new building. My mom would tell me about GLA and the involvement of all these women. It was a great grassroots organization from the very start.

Why is philanthropic support of the library necessary?

AVA: When GLA started, the library had to meet thresholds to reach the standards of a Phi Beta Kappa institution. Today, maintaining national standards for a resource library is, in some ways, obnoxiously expensive. It's crucial that we have digital resources that students and faculty use. But subscriptions can reach up to \$50,000 for a database. We want our students to access the same journals that



Wilcox and Goepfert next to the sculpture *A Knowing Woman*, by Gloria Tew. The statue was commissioned for the library by the Engelsma family in honor of Wilcox's mother, Fran.

university libraries have, but they're costly. GLA provides between 20 percent and 25 percent of the library's annual acquisition budget, to enable students to have access to these materials.

With so many resources being digital, some might wonder why we still need the library building.



AVA: The library is still an important space for students. When GLA was planning the 50th anniversary of the library building in October, we saw that the library is a meaningful space. The library is not just about the resources, which students can access anywhere. It's also about providing a space for people to focus on their work, even have some fun with their friends. I certainly goofed off a bit in the library. That's important, to provide this gathering space on campus. The library represents being a student more than we think.

A highlight of GLA's work is the biennial gala, A Royal Affair. How important is that event for GLA?

SUSAN: For one thing, A Royal Affair is an opportunity for us to actively renew our commitment to the College and the goal of providing resources for the library. We're hosting a party to

contribute to the Gustavus legacy of education and excellence.

AVA: A Royal Affair also reminds people that they're not contributing to a book that's going to gather dust on a shelf. At the library's 50th anniversary celebration, a student spoke about how he stayed on campus throughout the pandemic. The

library stayed open, so he went there as a refuge. He would wander the stacks and pick random books to read. These were books provided by donors. They provided a moment of relief for this student in a very dark time. Being a friend of the library isn't just about contributing toward resources. It's about whom those resources reach.

WHY I GIVE: Connor Myhre '18

"IT'S SUCH A PROFOUND OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN MUSIC AND PERFORM IT."

I'm one of three siblings who went to Gustavus, and it all started with my older sister who started there when I was 12. Gustavus was the first college I had ever been to, and I had spent so much time there visiting her, going to choir concerts and other programs. When I was in high school and exploring different colleges, at each one I would think, "This is fine, but it's not Gustavus." The other schools just didn't feel like home.

I majored in Communication Studies and minored in Scandinavian Studies. But I also spent so much time in the music building. In my first year, I sang in the Choir of Christ Chapel, and then I was a member of the Gustavus Choir from sophomore through senior year. Along with choir, I also took voice lessons and a couple of music classes thanks to the Björling Music Scholarship. When I think about the time I spent in lessons and rehearsals, together with touring and performing, the time I dedicated to music feels equal to my major and minor

programs, if not more.

That time was so valuable. When you prepare a piece, especially in choir, you learn so much about the history of it and the artistic elements that should inform its performance. You have to memorize the music and perform it to the conductor's expectations. And getting feedback in lessons from my voice professor helped me grow not just as a singer but also as a student and now a professional. I never liked singing solo, but doing so helped me become more confident in all areas of my life.

My background in music is important to how I carry out my day-to-day work managing communication for the University of Minnesota Medical School and University of Minnesota Physicians. I can take occasionally dry but always scientific content and give it life and meaning for patients and others. It's presenting science with artistic expression.

Just as my sister's time at Gustavus led me to enroll there, so did her service on



the Friends of Music board inspire me. She and my brother-in-law have been such great role models with involvement at Gustavus.

There are others as well, alumni I know who are still supporting the music program. So when the invitation came to support Friends of Music, I leapt at it. It's such a profound opportunity to learn music and perform it, and considering all the wonderful experiences I had, I wanted to make that possible for the next generation of students, too.

