Belief in UW education drives Gullikson's service

By DEBRA BAKER BECK, Alumni News Editor

For many of us, having to ask someone for a contribution is very difficult. Fortunately for the University of Wyoming, 1996 Medallion Service Award recipient Mary Thorsen Gullikson (BS, 1958) isn’t that type of person.

Gullikson is one of UW’s most ardent supporters and advocates who is not afraid to lead major fundraising efforts.

“I have asked so many, many people for money over the years,” Gullikson says, on behalf of UW and many other worthy organizations. “The idea of people having an aversion to asking people for money isn’t really, really the thing that I’m working on. The thing that I am working on is the idea that there are truly worthwhile projects. I am not asking for this money for me, I am asking for this good cause.”

For many, this is Mary’s favorite cause has been her alma mater. She has contributed via service on the UW Alumni Association board (1988-1992), the Foundation Board (she was president from 1992-93), and the UW Art Museum Board (including service as auction chairman 1994-95). Most recently, she has chaired the UW College of Health Sciences Advisory Board and the Strategic Planning Council. Her biggest goal of the moment: leading a massive capital campaign to give the College of Health Sciences a name. The $15 million project includes renovation of the Old Biochemistry Building (formerly the Agriculture Building, built in 1974) as well as construction of a School of Nursing and a link between those facilities and the School of Pharmacy Building.

Leading a project of this magnitude is not easy, but Mary’s enthusiasm for this project is contagious. It’s not “I,” she says, but “we.”

“We’re going to take something old and make it new again,” she says of the planned renovation. “We’re going to give it a new life.”

“I talk about this all the time,” Gullikson says of her favorite project. “I know that people are getting sick of hearing me nagging and nudging about it.”

But that’s okay with her, because foremost in Mary’s mind is the improved learning environment. The project will create for future health sciences students and faculty. Currently, classes, labs and department offices are scattered across campus in 10 locations, including the basements of other colleges. That’s hardly an environment conducive to learning, Gullikson says.

“They deserve to be in a place where they can be integrated in their teaching and where all the work that they do, both learning and for efficiencies. Every person will use some kind of medical attention in their lifetime,” Gullikson notes. “It behooves us to do our best for the education of our Wyoming students, who will be delivering our medical care.”

She finds it particularly distressing that the college’s dome sits above the campus police station, isolated from its faculty, staff and students.

“I have felt very, very strongly that the College of Health Sciences deserves to have a home,” she says, noting that it is the only college that does not have a building of its own.

Gullikson is certain that reaching the project’s fundraising goal is simply a matter of getting the word out to the right sources.

“There are people who are generous and who like a good project if they just know about it,” she says.

To the Alumni Association. She calls the four years spent on that body “the regeneration of my affection for the university,” because it brought her back in contact with old classmates and acquaintances and introduced her to a new group of friends.

She praised the board for its ability to generate energy and ideas, noting that many who serve are community activists who carry that tradition to their work with the university.

“There’s such a ‘can-do’ attitude on the association board, she says.

Gullikson found a similarly energizing environment when she joined the Foundation board in 1989. Her service on both boards opened up many personal opportunities and exposed her to a variety of experiences, from attending cultural performances to touring UW’s world-class research facilities.

“The university connection has been a highlight in my life, as it surely is for others who are affiliated,” she says.

The fact someone found her commitment worthy of the Medallion Service Award caught Gullikson by surprise.

“I was totally bowled over,” she says, noting previous recipients like friends Ann Simpson and Peg Tobin. “I know that I am in very superior company.”

“I would never have dreamed that I could have been in that category,” she says. “It was the last thing I ever would have expected.”

Fulfilling Obligations

Gullikson views her contributions of time and money to UW as appropriate ways to return something to her native state. “I am doing it in her obligation, as it is for alumni everywhere.

“It seems to me that all of us from Wyoming and in California have an obligation to give back to that state, particularly to our university,” she says, noting that tuition has never come close to the cost of receiving a UW education.

The obligation to support the state and its educational institutions exists to people who move to the state because they enjoy the lifestyle, the environment or simply the lack of an income tax, she notes. Gullikson says it’s up to alumni to help support the university.

“Every alumni that we have in the state of Wyoming is serving some of these people,” she says. “We all need to talk about this opportunity that we have, including the need to support the state’s only university.”

“It behooves us to provide this for our young people.”

Biographical Information

Mary and her husband, David, long-time residents of Loveland, Colo., have a large family including four children: Anne (married to Ted Murgia, parents of Sophie and Eli), Emily (married to Charles Heidrick, parents of Madeline), Gloria, and Donald (married to Erik Gullikson).

After graduating from Upton, Wyo., High School, Gullikson earned an AA from Colorado Women’s College before transferring to UW. She earned a BS (Continued on page 25)
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he says, particularly the interaction he had with students.

Biographical Information

Mike and Jane (Metzler) Sullivan have three children: Michelle Sullivan-Kuehl, Patrick Sullivan (BS '89) and Theresa Sullivan Twaddle (BA '92). They also have two grandchildren, Michael James and Jack. Currently, Sullivan chairs the Policy Consensus Institute, a public policy board advancing the use of alternative dispute resolution in state policy issues. He also serves on the Buffalo Bill Museum board of directors and is a trustee of the Catholic Diocese of Wyoming.

Prior to serving as governor, his civic/philanthropic activities included: Casper Rotary Club (president), Natrona County Hospital board (chairman), St. Joseph Orphanage board, Natrona County United Fund, Shepherd of the Valley Nursing Home board, Northwest Bank-West Casper branch.

Service to UW includes: UW Alumni Association board (former), Institute for Environment and Natural Resources board, Land and Water Use Review advisory board, College of Engineering national advisory board, Cowboy Joe Club.

Awards include: Eleanor P. Williams Arthritis Award (1996), Bob Forrester Youth Award (1995), UW College of Law Outstanding Alumnus Award.

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in home economics (emphasis on nutrition and education) from UW in 1958. She also served a dietetic internship at Highland Alameda County Hospital at Oakland, Calif., in 1960.

Mary worked in dietetics at Berkeley, Calif., and at hospitals in Newcastle, Sundance, and Gillette, Wyo. She also recently served as executive director of DARE (Drug Abuse Resources and Education) in Loveland; and she is a one-third owner in the Thorsen family business, Black Hills Dentonite Co., in Casper.

When the Gulliksons moved to Loveland and started a family, they decided that she would stay home and raise the children. As the youngsters got older, Mary began a volunteer saga that she now lovingly calls "my main job." Her first volunteer experiences included going door to door during cancer crusades and delivering for Meals on Wheels. Since that time, she has gone on to service in a multitude of volunteer jobs, most of them related to health care in some way.

Her complete list of community service would fill pages of this issue. But a listing of some of her more recent volunteer assignments includes: Loveland Area United Way, All Saints Episcopal Church Vestry, McKay Medical Center Foundation, Loveland Community Foundation, Loveland Community Health Advisory Committee, Loveland Rotary Club, precinct committeewoman, UW Alumni Association life member, Lutheran Health Systems Corporate Board, Zonta and PEO.

Gullikson's service extends back to her days at UW. While there, she was active in Pi Beta Phi sorority and the ASUW Student Senate. She also was a member of the home economics honorary, Phi Upsilon Omicron.

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Marshall University in West Virginia where, over eight years, he led the Thundering Herd program to five consecutive NCAA Division I-AA football playoffs and a national championship in 1992. In 1993, he received the Commissioner's Award for outstanding leadership and service to the Southern Conference.

Among the UW athletics accomplishments during Moon's tenure are winning the inaugural Western Athletic Conference Pacific Division football title, and ending the 1996 season ranked No. 22 in the nation; engineering the largest home crowd in Wyoming football history (34,745) for the 1997 game against Colorado State University; and playing the Cowboys' first-ever preseason football game in 1997 against Ohio State in the inaugural Eddie Robinson Football Classic.

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