

## Mick and Susie McMurray

by Julianne Couch  
Alumnews Editor

Sometimes service is significant enough that it takes more than one person to accomplish it. Such is the case with Neil "Mick" McMurray and Susan K. "Susie" McMurray, recipients of the Medallion Service Award for service to the University of Wyoming. According to Susie, working together toward a greater good was natural for the couple. "We have the same interests, values, standards and ethics, but we each like different things. But then we collaborate and make good decisions together."

"Our agenda is to build a better Wyoming," Mick says.

Mick is a 1968 graduate with a degree in business administration; Susie graduated in 1970 with a degree in elementary education. Mick explains that his college years were spent on course work and holding down a job. Susie, too, was a focused on obtaining her degree and therefore did not participate in extracurricular activities. That focus on academics paid off, as both went on to be accomplished professionals in their fields. He is president of Nerd Gas Company, LLC, and she was a classroom teacher and retired in 1975 to be a full time mother.

The McMurrays have taken the rewards of those accomplishments and "paid it forward," as the expression goes. The recipients of their generosity include countless community organizations around the state, aided by the McMurray Foundation, which they founded in 1998. They have also partnered with UW on many projects, and through their contributions have helped make the university the thriving place it is today.

Mick explains why the couple wanted to assist the university in a variety of ways. "It was an easy decision because both of us went to college here; we're both natives of Wyoming. If we don't do this no one else is going to do it for the state of Wyoming. It's about keeping the wealth in our state, and the wealth is defined as the children." He adds, "When Susie and I went to UW it was tough times, there was very little talk about building something new - it was what curriculum to cut." He is pleased that times are now better both for the state and the university.

The McMurray Foundation's financial support of the university exceeds \$7 million. They have been



Susie McMurray and Neil "Mick" McMurray

involved with the Wyoming Technology Business Center (Business Incubator) and the plaza conference center currently under construction. According to Brent Hathaway, dean of the College of Business, "not only have they given financial support, their vision has been integral in helping these projects come to fruition."

One project of which no fan of Cowboy football can be unaware is the new playing surface at War Memorial Stadium. Dubbed "Jonah Field," the synthetic surface is tough enough for use into the foreseeable future, and provides safer footing for players. It was given its name because of the McMurray's stake in energy development in the Jonah Field near Pinedale, Wyo. Development in that field has been quite successful, allowing the McMurrays to contribute to the funding of the new surface.

Other contributions the Foundation has made to the university include the Judy Catchpole Classroom in the College of Education annex, the Athletics Indoor Practice Facility, the Simpson Plaza, and the McMurray Fellowship in Energy Research Fund. According to Susie, "Whenever we partner with the university on a project, we can always be assured of the highest quality."

Trustee Judy Richards returned the compliment. "Those of us at UW realize that we must have a sound plan in place before Mick and Susie take an interest. That has encouraged us to be thoughtful during our planning."

The McMurrays are President's Society members, Cornerstone Award recipients, APUW Wyoming Family Award recipients, Campus Advisory Board members, and each has received a college Distinguished

Alumni award (Mick from the College of Business in 2006, and Susie from the College of Education in 2004.) According to Jacque Buchanan, who supported the McMurray's nomination, "Their philanthropy is legendary - not just to UW, but to Wyoming. Their investments in education and in children, their care for those who have less or who have pain or misfortune, the thoughtful guidance they provide through their investment and philanthropy, and their pure generosity of spirit make them ideal recipients."

In addition to their support of UW, the McMurrays have made a difference in Wyoming. He has served on the Wyoming Business Council and is on the steering committee of the Wyoming Business Alliance/Wyoming Heritage Foundation. He was involved with the restoration of the Plains Hotel in Cheyenne. She has spent decades as a volunteer for a local hospice and for Gentle Hands, which supports terminally ill patients and their families in Casper. She was a founding member

of Wyoming's Court Appointed Special Advocates program (CASA). They were foster parents for 25 years. "We've never been without a car seat," Mick notes.

Sen. Mike Enzi has offered his support of the McMurray's award. "The McMurrays are a great example of people who have been extremely generous and a vital source of support for many different projects on the state and local level. Through the years, they have done a great deal to provide jobs and help diversify Wyoming's economy. That is the kind of effort that will provide benefits to all the people of our state for a long time to come."

Enzi went on to say, "I can't think of anyone more deserving of the university's recognition for community service than the McMurrays. They are two people the university can point to with pride for their ties to the university and to the community in which they live."

The McMurrays live in Casper, and have two daughters, Jillian and Trudi, who is the executive director of the foundation. Susie says she and Mick were "honored and humbled" to receive this award.

Mick explains a bit about his personal background that makes him so connected to the state he loves. "Grandfather Otto McMurray came to Wyoming in 1917 because he had starved out of the homestead in Greeley, Colorado, when he was 17. He got a job at Standard Oil refinery. He was tickled to have a good paycheck. The description of work he put every day on his time card was 'gave it hell.'"

He adds, "If we're not happy in Wyoming now we'll never be happy because the economy is strong and everybody is doing pretty well. We can keep our standard of living good and build it on our own terms, as Gov. Stan Hathaway used to say. That's what we want to do. We're sticklers."

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