Building the Bridge to the Future

For several years, much of the fundraising and planning at LaGrange College has been focused on building the Frank and Laura Lewis Library. So, what happens when a large capital project is completed a year ahead of schedule? Then, it’s time to build a bridge.

Since 1996, Dr. Stuart Gulley and his wife, Kathleen, have devoted their lives to advancing the College toward distinction among liberal arts and sciences institutions, raising more than $107 million in support of the school and her students. As they prepare to leave in June, LaGrange alumni, parents, friends, faculty, staff, volunteers and community members have the opportunity to help secure LaGrange College’s future and to recognize the Gulleys.

The institution has launched the Bridge to the Future Million Dollar Match, a drive to generate contributions for enhanced programs and operations, build a new pedestrian bridge on campus and—through its naming—provide a way to honor President and Mrs. Gulley for their service.

During the Bridge to the Future Million Dollar Match, every gift, pledge payment or new pledge made to the annual fund by June 30, 2009, will be matched 2-for-1 up to $1 million from an endowment established by a generous donor—tripling the impact of gifts and pledge payments.

For example, a $100 donation for enhanced programs and operations becomes a $300 gift or pledge—with $200 designated for bridge construction. By supporting the College’s annual needs, donors underwrite the resources that enable it to fulfill its mission of challenging the minds and inspiring the souls of young people.

Such unrestricted support provides scholarships that give deserving students the chance to realize their dreams of getting a college education. It enables LaGrange and its leaders to create and implement strategic initiatives that increase academic rigor and enhance learning through educational experiences like servant-leadership and study-abroad programs.

As the bridge to LaGrange College’s future, donors who give regularly to fund enhanced programs and operations strengthen the institution much like a traditional endowment. LaGrange College refers to those who give consistently as Living Endowment Annual Donors (LEAD), those providing a dependable source of income for the school’s most vital needs.

Once donors meet the Bridge to the Future goal, the College’s Trustees will name the new bridge in honor of President and Mrs. Gulley.

“The Gulleys’ impact during their tenure at LaGrange has been tremendous,” said Bill Hodges, Chair of the College’s Board of Trustees. “It is with a sense of deep appreciation that we made the decision to honor Stuart and Kathleen with the naming of the new pedestrian bridge.”

The structure will be located adjacent to the new Lewis Library and span Vernon Street, connecting the Hill with

Crossing Vernon Street and connecting the Lewis Library to the expanding campus to the south, a new pedestrian bridge will feature a design reminiscent of the Callaway Clock Tower, a local landmark.
new parking areas and the south part of campus.

Designed in a style in keeping with the College’s historic architecture, the bridge will feature a clock tower that is reminiscent of the Callaway Clock Tower, a local landmark that was built in 1929 by Callaway Mills employees in honor of Fuller E. Callaway Sr. 

On the span’s south side, a staircase and an elevator for handicap access will lead to a walkway 21 feet above Vernon Street. Seven-foot-tall clocks will face Vernon Street to the east and west.

“A pedestrian bridge is something the College has needed for some time now, and the construction of the Lewis Library has offered the perfect opportunity to bring this project to life,” said Scott Hawkins ’74, Chair of the College’s $65 million Defining Moment campaign. “The bridge will fill a big need, and at the same time allow us to honor a couple who have taken LaGrange College to new heights.”

Construction of the bridge began in January and is expected to be completed this spring. The Lewis Library’s dedication ceremony is scheduled for April 17.

To make a donation during the Bridge to the Future Million Dollar Match and honor President and Mrs. Gulley, contact the Development Office at (706) 880-8039 or development@lagrange.edu or visit www.lagrange.edu/definingmoment.

Once fundraising is complete, plans call for the new high-visibility structure to be named in honor of President and Mrs. Stuart Gulley.

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Gill honors biology professor with gift

Decades of students remember Dr. John L. Shibley, former professor of science at LaGrange College, as a patient man who delighted in their “light-bulb” moments and helped many to recognize their untapped passions for science.

In an act of sincere gratitude, alumna Cheryl Cook Gill ’68 and her husband, Jim, made a generous contribution to the College and asked that their gift honor Dr. Shibley’s memory.

On Dec. 1, friends and family joined the Gills for a ceremony to dedicate the Shibley Cell and Molecular Biology Lab in the Cason J. Callaway Science Building.

Dr. Shibley taught biology at LaGrange College from 1950 until he retired in 1986. Gill worked as his student aid and enjoyed a career in the medical field before eventually becoming a college professor herself.

In July 2008, Dr. Shibley passed away. During the dedication, his son, Joe, spoke on behalf of the family, “Dad loved this place; this part of his life was richly rewarding for him,” he said. “We’ll always be indebted to Jim and Cheryl for making this possible.”

A December event marked the naming of a renovated campus laboratory in memory of longtime professor Dr. John Shibley. Pausing after the dedication are, from left, Shibley’s son-in-law the Rev. Ricci Turpin ’76; son-in-law and daughter, Randy and Marianna Drinkard; Cheryl Gill; son, Joe ’75; daughters Rebecca Turpin ’76 and Susan Letteer; Jim Gill; and President Gulley.
Alumni return to the Hill for Book Brigade

On January 27, LaGrange alumni from classes spanning five decades—from 1949 to 2009—converged on the College to participate in the 2009 Book Brigade, a time-honored tradition of moving books from an old library facility to a new one, in this case from the Banks building to the new Frank and Laura Lewis Library.

The first Book Brigade happened in 1949. World War II was ending, and the Cold War was under way. George Orwell’s classic “1984” was published, and the first Volkswagen Beetle arrived in the U.S.

For many years, the College’s library was located in the cramped quarters of the Hawkes Hall basement. When the decision was made to move the library to the Banks facility (now the Quillian Building), Librarian Carrie Fall Benson organized the move across the Quadrangle. Students filled buckets with books and passed them fire-brigade style to the new location.

Miriam Lowe Adamson ’49 remembers the event well. “Miss Benson nearly had a heart attack because the students weren’t keeping the books in order,” she said. “The Dewey Decimal System was very sacred to her.”

Between 1949 and 1960, LaGrange College’s student body more than doubled. In 1961, with a generous gift from Callaway Community Foundation (Callaway Foundation, Inc.), plans were developed to build a new library that could house 100,000 volumes. It would be named in honor of Mr. and Mrs. William N. Banks. For 13 years, he served as chairman of the College’s Board of Trustees; his wife, Evelyn, was the daughter of a LaGrange alumna, class of 1885.

The new facility was completed in the spring of 1963 when everyone was drinking Coca-Cola’s new soft drink TaB and the Beatles had not yet arrived in the United States.

Irene Melson was the College’s librarian; she joined the staff shortly after the death of Carrie Fall Benson in 1949.

She arranged for the College’s second Book Brigade to take place on April 3. According to a 1963 press release, classes were cancelled for the day so that students and faculty could move books and other materials from today’s Quillian Building into the “bright and new William and Evelyn Banks Library.” Melson said of relocating to the new building, “It will seem like entering the Promised Land.”

To celebrate the library’s opening, Fuller E. Callaway Jr. presented the College with a rare 1956 reproduction of the Gutenberg Bible, which remains in the library’s archives.

On March 28, 1963, LaGrange students Sharon Crawford ’76 and Ted Alford ’65 shared their first date. The next week, as participants in the 1963 Book Brigade, they had a second date carrying stacks of books into the new facility. (They married in 1964.)

Three-year-old Mary Ann Henry Kirven ’68, daughter of then College President Waights G. Henry Jr., carries a load as students move books during the 1949 Book Brigade.
It was beautiful weather,” said Mrs. Alford. It took all morning for the 500-strong student body to move approximately 26,000 books. “At about 10:30 we took a break,” she said. “We all sat down on the lawn in front of Hawkes Hall.” To liven up the day’s festivities, then-president Waights G. Henry Jr. appointed two of the College’s most talented guitarists to stroll the lines of students, playing folk songs and “college ditties.”

Of their decision to participate in the 2009 Book Brigade, Mrs. Alford said, “This brings back some great memories; we wouldn’t miss the opportunity” to be part of LaGrange College’s history-making move into the Frank and Laura Lewis Library.

After graduating from LaGrange, they became teachers and then administrators in the Troup County School System. He retired after 40 years of service, she after 39. They raised two sons, Dr. Terry ’91 and Matt ’94, who also graduated from the College.

Students, faculty, staff and the community also were invited to participate in the Jan. 27, 2009, ceremonial event. With a collection of more than 100,000 volumes, the library utilized professional movers to relocate most of the books to the new facility earlier in the month.

Also lining up to help that day were current seniors, newlyweds and Presidential Scholars Laura ’09 and Chris ’09 Driggers, who met at the College in 2005. “It’s kind of fun doing it the way they did it back in 1963 and 1949,” Laura said. A biology major, she plans to pursue graduate studies that will enable her to become a physician’s assistant.

Chris believes the best thing about the Lewis Library is the “greater number of resources and the additional space that students will have to spread out.” Also majoring in biology, with a minor in religion, he plans to attend divinity school to prepare for a career in bio-ethics.

Following the move from Banks, students, friends and alumni gathered in the lobby of the new building where President Stuart Gulley announced, “The day has finally arrived! After years of planning, the dream of the Frank and Laura Lewis Library has become reality.”

The facility opened to LaGrange students on Monday, Feb. 2, the first day of spring semester. It will be dedicated in a ceremony on April 17, 2009.

During a period of celebration and thanksgiving for the new library, Dr. Robert K. Musil, scholar, environmentalist and Woodrow Wilson Visiting Fellow, will speak at several events beginning April 14, 2009. He is an expert on nuclear arms control and specializes in contemporary global security and Cold War history.

His new book, “Hope for a Heated Planet,” illustrates how Americans can be part of the solution to global warming. (For more, see page 4.)

The dedication ceremony for the Frank and Laura Lewis Library is planned for Friday, April 17, at 11 a.m. and will feature a tribute to its namesakes—Frank and Laura Lewis.

That afternoon, Dr. Musil will head-line a panel discussion about the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) attributes of the library. In the evening, the building will be open for tours at 6:30 p.m., including a concert by the Sons of Lafayette at 7:30 p.m.

On Thursday, April 23, the Friends of the LaGrange College Library and the Warren Featherbone Foundation present an evening with Georgia writer and naturalist Janisse Ray, best known for her acclaimed book “Ecology of a Cracker Childhood.”

A nature commentator for Georgia Public Radio, Ray grew up in Baxley, Ga. She teaches Creative Writing at Chatham University and works to preserve the 3,400-acre Moody Forest in Georgia’s Appling County.

For Friends of the Library ticket information, call Laura Faulkner at (706) 880-8340 or e-mail her at lfaulkner@lagrange.edu.