

Benefactor

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Kevin Wells: Stanford Citizen

BY MEREDITH KUNZ

Kevin Wells, '84, MS '85, MBA '90, believes in Stanford. And one way he demonstrates that commitment is by giving broadly to programs across the university.

Together with his wife, Stacia, Wells recently made gifts in honor of his 25th reunion that will strengthen leadership training at the Graduate School of Business (GSB), create a meeting space for engineering students and faculty, support the physics department, and provide undergraduate scholarships. These gifts reflect Wells's academic journey at Stanford: from his undergraduate study of physics, to his master's in electrical engineering, to his business degree.

Their support carries on a tradition started by Wells's parents, Luanne and the late Frank G. Wells, LLB '59, a Disney executive who quietly began making gifts to the university shortly after Wells graduated.

"My father was very philanthropically minded and very focused on higher education. He wanted to give back to Stanford when he could," says Wells, a high-tech executive who recently took a position with Apple in Cupertino, California. The family's support has sustained Stanford in ways that do not always grab headlines, but that make them invaluable university citizens.

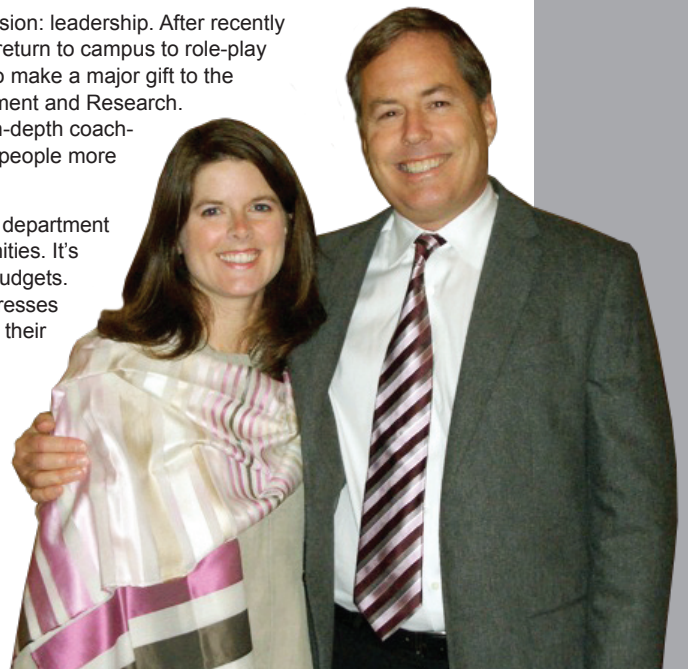
Wells works closely with deans and staff to learn about the university's most pressing needs and find ways to meet them that match his family's interests. One prime motivator is the family's passion for the environment. This, too, began with Wells's father, a staunch environmentalist who, along with his wife, Luanne, created Environment Now. This Santa Monica, California-based foundation has been instrumental in protecting forests throughout California and water quality in Southern California. Wells serves as board president for the foundation.

Part of his new gift will support a conference room in the Jen-Hsun Huang Engineering Center, the second of four buildings planned for a new Science and Engineering Quad. When the building opens this spring, the new meeting space, located near the entrepreneurship suite, will help foster collaborations for path-breaking engineering research and interdisciplinary work.

His career in technology management has led him to another passion: leadership. After recently participating in the GSB's Executive Challenge—in which alumni return to campus to role-play in simulated leadership exercises with students—Wells decided to make a major gift to the program's organizer, the school's Center for Leadership Development and Research. The gift furthers the center's work with students, which includes in-depth coaching designed to teach future executives how to lead and manage people more effectively.

His gift to the physics department is unrestricted, which allows the department chair to channel funds to immediate needs and emerging opportunities. It's the type of support that is invaluable—especially in times of tight budgets. And his President's Fund-level gift to The Stanford Fund also addresses a top priority: helping students who need scholarships to complete their education.

Now moving back to the Bay Area with his family, Wells looks forward to being closer to campus. "I appreciate so much the way Stanford approaches things," he says. "The university is an innovator and leader in so many ways, especially in creating new models in higher education and in being a key driver of the innovation that takes place in Silicon Valley." ■



Stacia and Kevin Wells, '84, MS '85, MBA '90, are members of The Stanford Challenge Leadership Council. Together with Kevin's mother, Luanne Wells, the family's ongoing generosity has touched many corners of the university across multiple schools and programs. In particular, their gifts have bolstered resources for undergraduate scholarships and graduate fellowships, and they recently funded the Wells Laboratory Suite in the new Jerry Yang and Akiko Yamazaki Environment and Energy Building, a cornerstone of Stanford's new multidisciplinary Science and Engineering Quad.

PHOTOS: Courtesy of K. Wells