

**AN UNCOMMON COUPLE:
Jill, '63, and John Freidenrich, '59, LLB '63**

BY MONIQUE JOHNSON



PHOTO: Steve Gladfelter

From its pioneering spirit to its exceptional breadth of excellence, Stanford is distinct among institutions of higher education. Yet, more than any other defining feature, it is the people who surround the institution that make this a special place. People like Jill and John Freidenrich.

The Freidenriches' commitment to Stanford spans three university presidents and more than 40 years. The couple has supported a range of university priorities from athletics and undergraduate scholarships, to law, art, and medicine, and recently established the Freidenrich Support Foundation, a unique philanthropic vehicle designed to benefit Stanford over many years (see sidebar).

They have also given generously of their time and talents, taking on various volunteer leadership roles. John, a Silicon Valley attorney and venture capitalist, has served on numerous boards from the law school to the medical school, from the hospitals to the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research. He also served 10 years on the university's Board of Trustees, including a term as board chair from 1992 to 1996.

Jill has served on the medical school's Cancer Council, the Committee for Art Board of Governors, and various art panels across campus. Together the couple helped drive nationwide fundraising during the billion-dollar Centennial Campaign. In the words of Gerhard Casper, who started his Stanford presidency as John Freidenrich began his term as board chair, John is known for giving "unstintingly" of his time and thoughtful counsel, and Jill for her grace and "boundless energy and goodwill."

Today, their exemplary leadership continues—at Stanford Medical Center, the Cantor Arts Center, and on behalf of The Stanford Challenge. Their many honors include the Governors' Award, the Gold Spike, and the School of Medicine's Dean's Medal—and now the Degree of Uncommon Man and Woman, awarded in December for their unwavering and selfless service to Stanford.

Sharing a Passion for Art

Throughout the campus, from the Cantor Arts Center to the corridors of the hospitals, the Freidenriches' remarkable passion for art—and for sharing this passion with others—is evident. As a young couple, Jill and John began collecting all things Diebenkorn. Their pursuit soon extended to other contemporary artists, and from building their personal collection to augmenting that of the university.

When the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake struck, Jill was attending a Committee for Art meeting in the museum basement. In the aftermath of the shock, the couple quickly recognized the need to rebuild. They also saw an opportunity to create an even more vibrant art center to serve the university and the public. As a trustee, John helped to convince university leaders of this vision. As donors, they offered significant financial backing, including endowment for the Cantor Arts Center directorship and a commitment to the rebuilding project that helped create the center's largest exhibition space, the Freidenrich Family Gallery.

"The museum validates for me what art is all about, which is teaching," says Jill. "The students are so richly connected, and we've been fortunate enough to be able to find art and work with curators to expand their learning opportunities."

Over the years, they have loaned and gifted works of art from their personal collection—including a richly textured Elmer Bischoff painting and a characteristically minimalist Hans Arp sculpture—and helped bring special exhibitions to the museum. They have become a trusted sounding board for Thomas Seligman, the Jill and John Freidenrich Director.

Jill has also worked tirelessly alongside other volunteers to brighten the lobbies, hallways, and treatment areas of Stanford Hospital & Clinics with contemporary artwork. The diverse collection assembled by the hospital Art Commission over the last two decades includes more than 900 original pieces of art and 3,500 fine art posters. Their efforts have transformed the environment for patients, families, staff, and the community.

"It is very gratifying to get letters from patients who say, 'You know, you don't have any idea how warm it made me feel to look at this particular painting. It took me away from my troubles for half an hour,'" says Jill.

Driving the Future of Medicine

The couple's involvement with the medical center stretches back to the mid-1980s when John first joined the boards of Stanford Hospital and Lucile Packard Children's Hospital. But their interest took on a new urgency in 1991 when Jill was diagnosed with breast cancer, an experience that "came out of nowhere" and affected their entire family.

Emerging from the crisis, the Freidenriches looked for ways to make a difference. Jill rolled up her sleeves to co-found Breast Cancer Connections, a unique community-based breast cancer resource center and support network. Today, the organization draws on hundreds of volunteers to provide support—free of charge—to nearly 2,000 individuals each year. "Nobody should have to face the diagnosis alone," says Jill.

Together, they deepened their connections to Stanford's hospitals and medical school, and provided critical support for the emerging cancer center, including a gift to name the Freidenrich Breast Center in 2004.

With the launch of The Stanford Challenge, Jill and John once again recognized a unique opportunity—this time, to help drive the future of medicine. In order to coordinate vital medical research, they realized the importance of bringing together the university's vast scientific and clinical resources to move the latest breakthroughs from bench to bedside as quickly as possible.

"Stanford is one of the few places where this is possible," says John Freidenrich. "There are many talented people in different disciplines all on one campus. They are bright, tireless, and collaborative, and once they get together, incredible things happen."

Thanks to the Freidenriches' leadership and incredible generosity, the School of Medicine has been able to attract new faculty members—unique clinician-scientists—and provide seed funding to foster their translational research programs. And in 2011, the school will break ground on the Freidenrich Center for Translational Research, a 30,000-square-foot hub for physicians and scientists, as well as biostatisticians, nurses, patients, and clinical trial staff. The center will provide unlimited promise for the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of cancer and other diseases.

"We are very excited about this program and hopeful that some real advances will come out of it—in scientific research and patient care," says John. "It could make a big difference for a lot of people."

"It's stimulating, and it's upbeat," adds Jill. "It helps keeps us young." ■



ABOVE: In honor of their rare and extraordinary service to the university, President John Hennessy presented John, '59, LLB '63, and Jill Freidenrich, '63, with the Degree of Uncommon Man and Woman in December.

PHOTO: Steve Castillo.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE:**The Freidenrich Support Foundation**

Since his days as a university trustee, John Freidenrich has been a strong advocate for offering Stanford donors creative ways to give. Recently, he and Jill established the university's first "support foundation," a philanthropic organization uniquely linked to Stanford. John Freidenrich explains:

What sets a support foundation apart from other ways of giving?

"For a start, a support foundation is created under the umbrella of a parent nonprofit institution, in this case Stanford University. You're treated like the university, which affords you superior tax benefits, and you incur relatively low overhead.

"In return for those benefits, the university retains legal control of the board. Our Freidenrich Support Foundation has a five-person board: three positions are appointed as designees of the university and two are from our family.

There is no fixed spending structure, so it offers a lot of flexibility, and from the university's standpoint, it's essentially unrestricted money, which is extremely valuable."

Why did you and Jill choose this approach?

"Making this a focus of our estate planning is the biggest philanthropic decision we've made. The support foundation enables us to have a continuing involvement with Stanford, an institution to which we are deeply committed. It also allows us to work in partnership with the university to define our philanthropic goals and objectives. At a place like this, there is always something new and interesting to consider supporting.

"What's more, we have a lot of confidence that the university will continue to be well managed and served by people for whom we would have a great respect. Whether we spend it all now or leave some for the future, I know our investment will be in good hands." ■