

Suzanne Pohland Paterno '62

Sue Paterno hasn't had a paying job since 1963, but she's never stopped working. In addition to raising five children, she's devoted herself to improving the lives of others—from helping student-athletes at Penn State work on their writing to providing enduring memories for Special Olympic athletes from across the state. With characteristic modesty, Paterno insists, "I don't think what I do is all that special." Those who benefit from her efforts would beg to differ.

Many of those beneficiaries live and attend classes just up the street from her State College home. Her work on two recent projects—the Paterno Library and the Pasquerilla Spiritual Center—reflects her commitment to helping students. Paterno says she and her husband, Joe, directed their time and money to the library to raise awareness of the importance of maintaining a first-rate library at the University. "Plus, we met there," she laughs. Paterno's work on behalf of the new spiritual center stems from her respect for the late Father James May. "He was a great priest," she recalls, "and his dream was to have a bigger spiritual center on campus. The organ loft will be named for him." Paterno is pleased that attendance at the spiritual center has increased. "I'm proud of the library and the spiritual center for different reasons," she says. "They both help students become complete persons."



Paterno frequently finds herself in the role of informal adviser to the many students she meets on campus and as honorary chair of countless events. "I always tell students 'find out what you're passionate about and then go there,'" she says. "That's what we've done." Paterno is clearly passionate about the Pennsylvania Special Olympics, a cause she's championed since 1989. She's served as co-chair of the opening and closing ceremonies for 16 years and sat on the statewide board since 1991. Her interest in the group dates to 1977 when one of her sons suffered a serious head injury. Though he fully recovered, Paterno says she gives her time to Special Olympics for all the parents who can't because they're too consumed with providing for the special needs of their children. Concerned about the increasing cost of hosting 2,200 athletes and up to 700 coaches each summer, the fundraising veteran says she'll next help the state board with its first capital campaign.

Paterno's other contributions stretch from helping to establish Penn State's Summer Institute for Academic Achievement, a program that offers underrepresented students additional preparation for college, to serving as chair of the annual United Way campaign and honorary co-chair for the Alumni Association's National Service Week. She currently sits on the University's Leadership Gifts committee, the National Council for Penn State Philanthropy, and the Libraries Development Advisory Board.

In 1998, she joined with her husband in pledging \$3.5 million to Penn State. Their gift supported building the new interfaith spiritual center and the All-Sports Museum and will also endow faculty positions and an array of graduate fellowships and undergraduate scholarships. The fellowship and scholarship in the School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture honors her parents, Alma and August Pohland. Paterno's service and commitment to the University was previously recognized with the Lion's Paw medal in 1995, and she was the 1996 Renaissance Woman of the Year.

Paterno and her husband have five grown children—all Penn State graduates—and 14 grandchildren.

*This career summary is excerpted from the 2004 Distinguished Alumni Awards Ceremony booklet (June 4, 2004, The Pennsylvania State University).