

Alumna's gift creates Women's Leadership Center endowment

10/26/06

Mildred Haerter Pape, a 1940 alumna of Alfred University, is creating an endowment to support the University's Women's Leadership Center. "I really support the idea of a Women's Leadership Center," said Mrs. Pape, a retired public school teacher and guidance counselor from her home in Bradenton, FL. The idea of endowing the Center "just appealed to me." A native of Teaneck, NJ, Mrs. Pape and a good friend from high school, Evelyn Timmens Konanz Klink, first enrolled at New Jersey College for Women. "Evelyn didn't like it, and decided she was going to transfer to Alfred University because another friend of hers was attending" AU. Not to be left behind, Mrs. Pape transferred too. "We both loved it," said Mrs. Pape. The two are lifelong friends, and lived near each other for many years, even though their lives took different directions. Mrs. Pape earned her B.A. degree in mathematics and began teaching in public schools in Teaneck, N.J. She took additional course work in counseling and psychology at Montclair College and Seton Hall University and became a guidance counselor. She married the late John Pape, who was also a guidance counselor. A \$250,000 gift from an anonymous alumna started the Women's Leadership Center at AU. The Center hired its first director, Amy Jacobson, and opened its doors in The Commons during the summer of 2005. The Center is "dedicated to promoting the intellectual and social growth of Alfred University's women students," according to its mission. The Women's Leadership Center is fitting, too, because of Alfred University's history as the first co-educational institution in New York State, and arguably, the first in the nation to truly educate women on the same basis as men, noted AU President Charles M. Edmondson. "Mrs. Pape's generous gift will allow Alfred University to build upon our legacy for generations to come." "With this generous endowment pledge, and a successful first year behind us, we are now poised to create programs and initiatives that are truly distinctive, and thereby contribute to the national discourse about how colleges and universities can best support our women students and maximize their leadership potential," said Ms. Jacobson. When our women students are well-prepared to take on leadership roles, the benefits are widespread. "Mrs. Pape's generosity will impact the individual lives of our women students, and through them help transform our communities at local, national and international levels," Ms. Jacobson said. Over the course of its first year, according to the Women's Leadership Center's annual report, hundreds of people participated in its workshops, speakers' series, art shows and the "Finding the Line" survey sponsored by the Center. Ms. Jacobson noted the endowment created by Mrs. Pape's gift will allow several WLC initiatives to become vital aspects of the campus community, and core components of its programming. One such initiative is the Women's Leadership Academy, which will provide a comprehensive leadership development experience for a select group of students. Through a unique combination of curricular and co-curricular experiences, Academy participants will explore the meaning of leadership, investigate ways in which gender may or may not influence leadership, and create opportunities to enhance their leadership skills. The Academy will launch this spring. Other plans include an annual Women's Leadership Conference, now scheduled to begin during the summer of 2008, and a Summer Leadership Institute for high school girls that will be offered through the University's Office of Summer Programs. Kathy Woughter, vice president for Student Affairs, has served as a member of the Women's Leadership Center Advisory Board from the beginning. "As part of the advisory board that planned for the use of the initial challenge gift, I am delighted that the work of the women involved has led to a stellar first year for the Women's Leadership Center," said Ms. Woughter. "Last year when the Women's Leadership Center opened, it was obvious that this was an ideal opportunity for academic and student affairs collaboration. Through a wonderful year of collaboration, effective programming and hard work, the Center has firmly established itself as part of the Alfred University culture. "Millie Pape's endowment gift has ensured that the historic commitment to equality that AU has always been proud of will continue through the Women's Leadership Center. With a permanent future for the Women's Leadership Center at Alfred University, Director Amy Jacobson can fully implement a strategic plan that will help us capitalize on the fact that although Women's Centers are many on college campuses, those with a focus on leadership are relatively few. Millie Pape's endowment will help Alfred University create something totally innovative for our students that will distinguish AU from other universities for years to come," Ms. Woughter said.