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Class agents help alumni maintain ties to alma mater

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Furman campaign

Class agents help alumni maintain ties to alma mater

I recently traveled to Charlotte, N.C., where I enjoyed lunch with three Furman alumni representing the classes of 1983, 1985 and 1994.

Because all three have been loyal supporters of Furman, both with their time and financial resources, I posed the following question: "What is it about your Furman experience that causes you to give so much back during such busy times in your lives?" All three indicated that they want to do something for a place that gave so much to them. One alumnus added that Furman's "personal touch," even years after graduation, motivates him to continue to play a part in the life of the university.

Furman prides itself on its personal touch with students, but what keeps alumni connected to the university? One of the best examples is the contacts initiated by the 300 volunteers who serve in the class agent program.

In September of each year, class agents volunteer to call 10 classmates of their choice. The purpose of the call is to confirm address and biographical information, to remind people about upcoming Homecoming festivities, and to give alumni the opportunity to make a pledge to Furman.

After these calls begin, I often hear heartwarming "reunion" stories from agents who have reconnected with friends after many years of little or no contact. Agents frequently hear about the birth of children or grandchildren, or about a new job or a major change in a friend's personal life. And on occasion, they learn news about other Furman friends. Whatever the case, the agent is typically glad to have made the connection.

As Kelly Pinson Ferguson '89 says, "I thoroughly enjoy being a class agent because it gives me an annual opportunity to get in touch with classmates and fellow alumni whom I otherwise might see only during a reunion year. It's also an opportunity to give something back to Furman in a way that's convenient for me, since I don't live in close proximity to the campus."

Class agents also serve on reunion committees, helping to plan the reunion activities for their class. In August, all agents are invited to campus for Leadership Furman, a weekend that combines training and fun for Furman volunteers.

The university stays connected to alumni through various publications, Furman Club events, Homecoming and other special activities. However, a telephone call from a classmate can provide that special, five-minute reunion that's unlike any other connection the university makes. Furman is indebted to the 300 class agents who call 3,000 alumni each year to help them remain a part of a place that had a defining impact on their lives.

"Being a head agent is a labor of love that has helped me assume a sense of ownership in Furman," says Furman Cantrell '61. "It was not until I really became involved that I appreciated what Furman did for me, what Furman has done for other students and what Furman is doing for current students."

— Wayne King

Associate Director, Furman Fund

If you would like to volunteer as a class agent, please call 1-800-787-7534 or e-mail King at wayne.king@furman.edu.

Partners scholarship program builds relationships

The Furman Partners program isn't just a way to make a monetary donation to the university. It's a way to give the university to students.

Partners is a personalized scholarship program that donors may choose to fund in one of two ways. By providing an annual scholarship with a gift of \$25,000 or more per year, they choose to support one to four students. By endowing a Partners scholarship with a \$30,000 gift for five consecutive years, a Partner may support one or more students.

But the focus of Partners, which in 2000-2001 has 20 members sponsoring 76 scholars, is not money. It is relationships. Donors meet and get to know the recipients of their scholarships, so the donors and the students they support are connected in a personal way. Many of these acquaintances grow into close friendships.

**Furman Partners
do much more
than merely support
a deserving student's
college education.
They lead by
example.**

Carley Howard '01, a recipient of the the Hendricks-Hillcrest Scholarship funded by trustee Ralph Hendricks and his wife, Marion, spoke last fall at a Partners luncheon. She said, "I have never met two more humble people than Ralph and Marion Hendricks, and I don't think they have any idea how important they have been in my life. Because of their financial help, I have been able to dive into Furman

and take advantage of all that this school has to offer, instead of spending my time working after class.

"In addition, I hope to attend medical school, and this idea is so much more feasible considering I won't graduate with outstanding student loans. I would be a lesser person without the generous support and genuine friendship of Ralph and Marion Hendricks."

Furman Partners do much more than merely support a deserving student's college education. They lead by example. And perhaps one day, these students who have benefited from the generosity of others will reach out to someone else in the same manner.

To learn more about becoming a member of the Partners program, call Susan Day Gray '78, director of stewardship at Furman, at (864) 294-3716, or e-mail her at susan.gray@furman.edu.