**Donors Make the Difference**

Thanks to two alumni, Missouri Southern's beloved Fight Song has lyrics. The Missouri Southern State University Fight Song was written by Missouri Southern music professor Delbert Johnson in the early 1970s. Johnson wrote the tune but did not add words. So, for 40 years the song had no lyrics. Earlier this year, the university sponsored a contest to find a lyricist for the song.

The winners are Kathy DeMint, a music teacher at Stapleton Elementary School in Joplin and Amy Sampson, an English teacher at Monett High School. Both are MSSU alumnae.

DeMint and Sampson both submitted separate entries that were mold togethe r to create the lyrics for the Missouri Southern Fight Song. Brian Franzaglia, Director of Percussion Studies and Athletic Bands who oversaw the contest, says more than 100 entries were received.

"I am very pleased with the outcome," he says.

Sampson, originally from DeKalb, Missouri graduated in 2002 with an associate’s degree in teacher education from MSSU and in 2003 with a bachelor of science degree in teacher education, business, public safety, arts and sciences, education, and technology programs.

We can be proud that students in our education and accounting programs score higher than the national average on professional certification exams. And those are only two examples like this – there are many more. Thanks to recent renovations, we now have a state-of-the-art cadaver lab at Ummel Hall where students in our health sciences and athletic programs learn first-hand about how the human body functions and relate those lessons to their respective professions.

"It gives me great pride to be part of Missouri Southern State University’s long-standing tradition of excellence in learning, leadership, and building a strong legacy. Since 1957, Missouri Southern has encouraged and inspired its students, faculty, staff, and fellow alumni to be leaders in the classroom, in campus organizations, and in the community."

As we celebrate 75 years of academic and athletic pride, we are grateful for every friend and supporter of the MSSU Lion Pride who makes it possible for students to attain a quality and affordable education, and become successful members of our community. Thanks to your generosity we have been able to provide much needed resources for our health sciences, business, public safety, arts and sciences, education, and technology programs.

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"I have always had a strong attachment to Missouri Southern and a love for music," she says.

DeMint received her bachelor of science degree in music education and her vocal and instrumental K-12 certification from Missouri Southern in 1980. "I have always had a strong attachment to Missouri Southern and a love for music," she says.

Jennifer DeMint is director of the Joplin Elementary All-City Singers (an auditioned group of 4th and 5th graders from the Joplin R-8 School system). She also co-directs the Joplin Elementary All-City Orchestra.

Thanks to your support, Missouri Southern has been able to award more than $6,340,508 in scholarships to students, who are now part of our growing legacy. In this issue you’ll learn more about recently endowed scholarships and the donors and students.

As we prepare our students for a rapidly changing business climate, our new Master Facilities Plan focuses on strategies to further enhance the quality of facilities, classrooms, technology and education for our students and to provide instructional resources for our outstanding faculty. Three main focus areas include:

- creating a campus that is connected, welcoming, and inviting;
- improving quality of student life and amenities;
- raising the bar for academic spaces to better prepare our students for success.

This issue of our newsletter celebrates endowed music scholarships and the students they benefit at MSSU. Thank you for being part of the Missouri Southern family and for helping students follow in your successful footsteps.

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**Gift to Foundation Funds Lion Project**

The landscape of the Missouri Southern Oval will soon be enhanced by a new landmark, thanks to two significant gifts made to the Missouri Southern Foundation. This fall, a new, larger-than-life lion statue will grace the grounds in front of the Leon C. Billingsly Student Center on the west side of the campus Oval. The project is a step forward in the university’s Master Facilities Plan, which calls for new buildings, campus renovations and gateway signage over the next 25 years.

Made possible by generous gifts from Bill and Tracy Gipson and the MSSU Student Senate, the bronze statue will stand 10 feet in height and will be nearly 12 feet in length. The structure will be surrounded by a new plaza. The area will be accentuated with new seating and lighting, and will be a location designed to attract students and visitors.

"It’s a special moment for Missouri Southern to announce these gifts," said JoAnn Graffam, vice president of University Development and executive director of the Missouri Southern Foundation. "It is exciting to be able to accomplish another of our Master Facilities Plan projects, especially one that will be so visually meaningful and inspiring for our campus. We are very grateful to Bill and Tracy and the Student Senate for making this project possible."

Created for Missouri Southern by Brian Hanlon of Hanlon Sculpture Studio in Toms River, N.J., the bronze lion is one of Hanlon’s more than 200 original art pieces, which include works at Sebon Hall and Louisiana State University. The plaza will be constructed by RDG Planning and Design of Des Moines, Iowa, the firm that helped develop MSSU’s Master Facilities Plan.

Taylor Hass, MSSU Student Senate President, said the organization was quick to support the fundraising effort.

"We are proud to be a part of such a huge project on campus and to even..."
At MSSU, the legacy of excellence in music education continues through the efforts of donors who endow scholarships in honor of influential music educators. The Oliver and Roberta Sovereign Scholarship, for example, is an endowed scholarship established in memory of Oliver and Roberta Sovereign, whose dedication to music education at MSSU was instrumental in shaping the careers of many students. The Sovereigns, who were married for over 50 years, were known for their passion for music and their commitment to improving the lives of those around them. Their legacy lives on through the scholarships that bear their name, providing financial assistance and support to current students pursuing careers in music education.

In addition to the Sovereign Scholarship, MSSU offers a variety of other scholarship opportunities to students who demonstrate exceptional talent and promise in the field of music. These scholarships are made possible through the generosity of donors who understand the importance of supporting the next generation of music educators. Whether through large endowments or smaller gifts, each contribution plays a crucial role in ensuring that music education remains a cornerstone of MSSU's academic programs.

At MSSU, we believe that music education is not just about learning to play an instrument or sing, but about developing a deep understanding of the human experience and the power of music to inspire and uplift. Our donors recognize this and support the MSSU Music Gala, which is held each spring and helps to raise funds for music scholarships. The gala also serves as an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of MSSU's music students and to recognize the contributions of MSSU's music faculty.

Through the generosity of donors like the Oliver and Roberta Sovereign, MSSU continues to provide a world-class education in music education, preparing students to make a difference in the lives of others. As we celebrate the legacy of Oliver and Roberta Sovereign, we are reminded of the importance of giving back and supporting those who will carry on the important work of music education in the future.