Our Own Tinker to Evers to Chance
Three Alumni Team Up to Support the Home Field Advantage

In a move reminiscent of the famous double-play combinations of Cubs infielders Joe Tinker, Johnny Evers, and Frank Chance, University of Hartford alumni Robert Forrester ’66, Faisal Al-Marzook ’67, and John Carson ’65 have pulled off a remarkable feat of teamwork. Known for their close ties to the Hartford soccer program, the three have come together to make a gift of $450,000 to make renovations to the Yousuf Al-Marzook Fields as part of the university’s Home Field Advantage campaign. The campaign also supports construction of an on-campus baseball field, a new softball field, and an all-purpose track and field—all facilities that are critical to the success of the University’s Division I athletics program.

When completed, these new facilities will serve university student-athletes, students, faculty and staff, and the Greater Hartford community. The total cost of planning and constructing is expected to be $10 million. Phase I of the project earmarks $5.1 million for the renovation of Al-Marzook Fields and the construction of new baseball and softball diamonds. Phase II will fund the all-purpose track and field.

With the addition of the Forrester/Al-Marzook/Carson gift, the campaign is now about one-third of the way toward its goal. “It’s very gratifying to know that our alumni want to take a leadership role in making the Home Field Advantage project a reality,” says Pat Meiser-McKnett, the university’s director of athletics. “In Bob, Faisal, and John, we have three people who have given in so many ways. We appreciate the commitment they have made to the project as well as the impact they have on a day-to-day basis.”

Forrester, who is chairman and CEO of Payne, Forrester & Associates LLC, has pledged $300,000 to the campaign. In 2000 Forrester received the Vincent Brown Coffin Award, presented annually to a former student-athlete who has excelled in his or her professional career. As co-chair of the Home Field Advantage campaign (with Gary LaRocque ’75, vice president of baseball operations for the New York Mets), Forrester has challenged the members of the campaign committee to work together to raise one-quarter of the $10 million goal. “Provide your advice, your contacts, your involvement, and, when the time is right, your dollars.”

Al-Marzook, of Al-Marzook United Commercial Co. in Kuwait, has pledged $125,000 to the campaign. A life regent of the university, Al-Marzook previously donated the funds that made the Yousuf Al-Marzook Fields possible. Dedicated in the fall of 1977, the fields are home to the university’s soccer, softball, and lacrosse teams. At the time of the dedication of the fields, the donation was the largest single alumni contribution ever received by the university. The complex was dedicated to the memory of Al-Marzook’s father.

Carson, a former commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Economic Development and currently the university’s senior advisor for corporate and community relations, has pledged $25,000 to the campaign. A recipient of the 2002 A. Peter LoMaglio Award for service to athletics in 2002, Carson has supported the athletics department in a number of ways. He served as chairman of the department’s initial NCAA certification process in 1998 and the interim NCAA certification process in 2002, and is also a member of the department’s two oversight boards—the Athletics Council and the Hawks Athletics Board. Carson formerly served as the university’s interim vice president for finance and administration following six years serving as a member of the Board of Regents.

Forrester, Al-Marzook, and Carson now join the “Circle of Commitment,” which recognizes those who have donated $25,000 or more to the Home Field Advantage campaign. Other members of the circle are Tom and Suzy Reich, Jerry Orefice ’66, Jerry Kelly ’89, Bill Clew ’52, Denis Mullane, The Coca-Cola Company, and Kaman Corporation.

For more information about the Home Field Advantage campaign, contact James Keener, associate director of athletics, at 860.768.5063 or <jkeener@hartford.edu>.

In a dedication ceremony on April 22, the university honored the long-time commitment of Tom and Suzy Reich to the Department of Athletics by naming the western portion of the Sports Center complex the Reich Family Pavilion. The pavilion was dedicated to the memory of Barbara J. Reich, Tom’s late wife, who also was an ardent supporter of the university and its athletics programs. Tom Reich, who was named an honorary alumnus of the university in 1994, has been a member of the university’s Board of Regents since 1995. In addition to a $2 million lead gift to the university’s Home Field Advantage campaign (which supports the construction of an on-campus baseball field, a new softball field, and a new all-purpose track and field), the Reich family’s record of giving has included money for scholarships, grants, and annual support to various programs in the Department of Athletics. Tom and Suzy Reich are shown above with Mary Jestreby, mother of Barbara Jestreby Reich.
The Road from Hartt to Hollywood—and Back Again

When university regent and alumnus Kent McCray ’51 appeared as a guest lecturer for the Hartt School’s theatre students in March, little did they know that the California-based film and television producer played a role in today’s theatre program.

A native of Hartford, McCray says he may well have been the first theatre student at Hartt when he attended the university more than 50 years ago. During his student years at Hartt, McCray was the sole pupil of the renowned Elemer Nagy, the late costume and stage designer who brought international fame to the school until his death in 1971.

McCray, a television industry pioneer, counts Nagy as a major influence in his illustrious 45-year career. Soon after leaving Hartt in 1951, McCray joined NBC, working on such shows as the “Colgate Comedy Hour,” “The Red Skelton Show,” “Lux Video Theater,” the “Ralph Edwards Show,” and “This is Your Life.” In the later 1950s, he was an associate producer with Bob Hope, accompanying the legendary comedian on many of his overseas USO trips to entertain the troops.

In the early 1960s, McCray teamed up with Michael Landon to produce “Bonanza” and later, “Little House on the Prairie” and “Highway to Heaven.” The two became close friends and each served as best man at the other’s wedding. McCray still becomes visibly emotional when he talks of Landon’s untimely death in 1991. After Landon’s death, McCray and his partner and wife, Susan, a noted casting director, produced a two-hour tribute to Landon, “Memories with Laughter and Love.” Two “Bonanza” sequels followed in 1993 and 1994.

In recent years, his alma mater has become a major focus for Kent and Susan McCray. They dub their Malibu, Calif., home “University of Hartford West,” because of all the alumni, faculty, administrators, and regents who come to visit. The McCrays, in turn, drive across the country at least three times a year for regents meetings and other occasions at the university. Both McCrays have become involved on campus. During their March visit, the McCrays addressed the theatre students and Susan was honored at the University of Hartford Magnet School for, among other things, her efforts in raising money to fill the school library’s book shelves.

Another sign of Kent McCray’s commitment to the university is the $100,000 campaign leadership gift he made to the University of Hartford Performing Arts Center, the Hartt School facility to be constructed on the 7.2-acre site of the former Thomas Cadillac distributorship at the corner of Albany Avenue and Westbourne Parkway in Hartford.

“This is yet another example of the extraordinary generosity of our very good friends Kent and Susan McCray,” said Hartt Dean Malcolm Morrison. “They are very involved in our school and understand our needs. We are all extremely grateful.”

Magnet School Celebrates ‘Susan McCray Day’

On March 24, the University of Hartford Magnet School gave a warm thank you to one of its most enthusiastic supporters by celebrating “Susan McCray Day.”

In what turned out to be a complete surprise for McCray, students and teachers gathered in the Magnet School’s Agora Room to express appreciation for her tremendous devotion to the school.

When Principal Cheryl Kloczko told the youngsters that it was Susan McCray who had a major hand in filling the school library shelves with volumes of books, the students responded with an enthusiastic burst of applause. Last May, McCray, a corporator of the Hartford Art School, and her husband, Kent McCray, a university alumnus and regent, organized “The Magic of Reading, An Evening of Fantasy and Illusion.” The event drew some 400 people who contributed nearly $43,000 to the school’s Library Fund.

Most recently, Susan McCray purchased one of the brightly painted cows that had been on display at the West Hartford Cow Parade and donated it to the Magnet School. The cow was officially named “Madame MooCray” for the March 24 celebration. It is on permanent display in the Magnet School lobby.

Susan and Kent McCray are shown with University of Hartford Magnet School students and “Madame MooCray” during “Susan McCray Day.”
Generous Kohn-Joseloff Gift Benefits Gallery

The Kohn-Joseloff Foundation has made a $500,000 gift to the Joseloff Gallery at the university’s Hartford Art School. The gift will allow the gallery, one of the most distinguished university galleries of its size in the country, to strengthen and expand its schedule of exhibitions and programs.

In announcing the gift, University President Walter Harrison praised the Kohn and Joseloff families for their commitment to the Hartford Art School and its students. “The Kohn and Joseloff families have made possible a gallery of the highest quality. The Joseloff Gallery is a tremendous resource for our students and an asset for the entire community.”

The gift underscores the Kohn and Joseloff families’ long-standing support of the Hartford Art School, which dates to the 1940s when Lillian Joseloff joined the Hartford Art School’s board of trustees. In the 1960s, Taub Hall, the art school’s main building, was named after Joseloff’s daughter, Carol Joseloff Taub.

Joan Joseloff Kohn, an honorary trustee of the Hartford Art School, made the announcement of the gift on behalf of the foundation. “My family and I believe the Hartford Art School and the University of Hartford are wonderful resources for the Greater Hartford community. We are especially pleased to support the Joseloff Gallery. Its fine exhibitions and programs have helped to enrich so many lives,” Kohn said.

The Joseloff Gallery has established a reputation throughout the region for the high caliber of its exhibitions and the outstanding artists it attracts. The gallery, which also hosts student and faculty exhibitions, is an important educational resource for undergraduate and graduate students at the Hartford Art School, which last year celebrated its 125th anniversary. The Joseloff Gallery supports one of the art school’s educational priorities of incorporating a wide range of artistic expression into its offerings while reinforcing the importance of the visual arts in society.

Power Boothe, dean of the Hartford Art School, said, “This generous gift is a wonderful affirmation of the vital role the Joseloff Gallery plays in the lives of our students and faculty, the university community, and the Great Hartford arts community. We are deeply grateful to the Kohn-Joseloff Foundation for this remarkable gift.”

Aetna Foundation Supports Performing Arts Center

The Aetna Foundation has made a $100,000 gift to the University of Hartford Performing Arts Center. The center, to be constructed in Hartford at the corner of Albany Avenue and Westbourne Parkway, will provide needed additional space for The Hartt School and will serve as an important resource for the community.

The $25 million project is at the site of the former Thomas Cadillac distributorship and will convert three buildings designed in 1929 by pioneering industrial architect Albert Kahn into a vibrant new facility for performing arts education. The center will include new performance and rehearsal spaces, classrooms, dance studios, a performance library, and space for community meetings and functions.

In announcing the gift, Aetna Foundation President Marilda Gandara cited the important role the Performing Arts Center will play in the community. “The Aetna Foundation is proud to join with the University of Hartford in this project,” Gandara said. “The new center not only will expand the resources offered by The Hartt School, it will also bring performing arts education more fully into North Hartford. The Aetna Foundation is committed to supporting projects that strengthen our communities, and we believe the University of Hartford is taking an important step to broaden the educational reach of The Hartt School.”

University of Hartford President Walter Harrison said, “The Aetna Foundation has an outstanding record of stepping forward in support of projects that hold particular importance for our community. The Performing Arts Center is one of those projects, and it is my hope that their gift will prompt others to offer their own support.”

Parting Gifts

President Walter Harrison hosted a reception at Russell House on May 12 for the 130 graduating seniors who made $25 gifts to the university through the Senior Signature program. Begun in 2000, the program encourages graduating seniors to make gifts of $25 each to the university’s Annual Fund. Those who contribute have their names engraved on a senior class plaque hung on the outside wall of the University Commons.