

The Spirit of Giving

By financially supporting St. Olaf, Greg '70 and Mary Steeber aim to help students explore their intellectual curiosity.

By Suzy Frisch

Attracted to St. Olaf College by its strong science programs, Greg Steeber majored in chemistry and religion, but he graduated with far more than an academic credential. Not only did St. Olaf awaken his passion for helping others, but it also gave Greg a global perspective on the world, a new career direction in medicine, and a strong sense of community.

Greg went on to medical school at the University of Minnesota, becoming a family physician, and met his wife, Mary, at Holden Village, the Lutheran retreat center in north-central Washington's Cascade Mountains. After marrying, they opened a medical practice in Leavenworth, Washington, where their two daughters, Annelisa and Greta, were born. The Steebers settled in White Bear Lake in 1989 when Greg joined a larger medical group.

Greg and Mary were thrilled when both Annelisa '07 and Greta '09 chose to attend St. Olaf. They knew that going to a college that focuses on head, heart, and soul not only makes an academic experience more enriching and meaningful, but also that their daughters could gain a broad view of the world and become involved in any activity that interested them, from sports to music.

That's the type of experience he enjoyed as an Ole, say Greg, who was involved in numerous extracurricular activities and participated in the Theatre in London Interim and who, today, serves on the St. Olaf Alumni Board.

Greg and Mary have always tried to create opportunities for their daughters to develop a global perspective. When Greta and Annelisa were in fifth and seventh grades, the Steebers took them out of school for a semester to explore Europe, hoping to open the youngsters' eyes to the world.

"I wanted my children to understand our country in the context of the world," says Mary, who works in seminary relations at Luther Seminary in St. Paul. "If you live in this country and never leave it, you never have eyes to see that." At St. Olaf, Greta and Annelisa continued on the global journey their parents started, with both participating in Global Semester.

GIVING BACK

Throughout their lives, sharing their success with others has been important to the Steebers, and St. Olaf is a natural place for them to direct their giving.

"The mission of St. Olaf to educate students for lives of worth and service closely aligns with the values we hold dear," Greg explains. In addition, Mary says, they view giving to St. Olaf as a way to "participate in the future by helping to send smart, care-filled, and well-rounded people into a world that really needs them."

By financially supporting St. Olaf, the Steebers aim to help other students explore their intellectual curiosity within a faith-based community, learn the gift of service,

and gain a worldview. "Having a global perspective promotes understanding between people and allows us [to work] more easily for peace and justice instead of fearing the unknown, which leads to conflict," says Greg.

Grace Schroeder Scott '72, a senior principal gifts officer in Planned Giving, says she enjoys assisting donors like the Steebers with generous charitable gift plans, describing them as model donors.

The Steebers have funded an endowed scholarship at St. Olaf, given to the general endowment fund, and contributed toward an endowment for scientific equipment. They faithfully provide unrestricted support for St. Olaf through Partners in Annual Giving and included St. Olaf in their estate plans early on. In 1986, they became charter members of the college's planned gift legacy society. In addition, the couple helped plan the First Annual Black and Gold Gala in Minneapolis.

After all, Greg caught the spirit of giving while he was a student at St. Olaf. It's a value the Steebers strive to impart to the next generation — their own and St. Olaf's. 🐾

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Greta, Greg, Mary and Annelisa Steeber, photographed in Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives in January 2009.