

Heart of a Tiger: Patrick McGinnis and the power of community

Throughout the year, we host several events to thank the philanthropists who fuel the dreams of our students. I really love the fact that as we thank our supporters, we also honor the students impacted by their generosity. Bringing the students and their benefactors together creates an amazing opportunity to witness firsthand the ripple effect of philanthropy in action – those who inspire dreams and those whose lives are transformed in predictable and often unanticipated ways.

Often, these events allow participants to share the "why" behind their investment in others and ponder the "how" – how lives are forever changed through their efforts. These conversations evoke a deep sense of significance and pride.

For example, the recent College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences reception, featuring keynote speaker Patrick McGinnis, '91, '20, and '22, definitely provided witness to the power of philanthropy. I was eager to hear Patrick talk – after all, I consider Patrick a hometown hero entrepreneur, pastor, social worker, and overall good guy. The embodiment of a generous spirit.

A tiger by heredity, Patrick's mom and dad graduated with Fine Arts degrees in 1960. His dad also received a master's degree in fine arts and served as a professor of ceramics at FHSU for 30 years. Patrick's Tiger roots go wide and deep. A remarkable 17 of Patrick's siblings and their families have earned 21 different FHSU degrees.

Patrick shared treasured memories of how his dad loved his students – pouring into each student lessons of art and of life. His mom and dad also taught Patrick and his siblings many life lessons. Lessons like why freedom of creative expression is worth fighting for, that art and the process of expressing yourself have the power to change lives, and that people pulling together in a University that empowers them could make the world a better place. I was so drawn in, listening to this amazing person describe on a very personal level the mission of Fort Hays State University.

Patrick described the transformative education we work hard to create. "In my life and career, I have learned the importance of creating space for important things like real, 'count on you,' kind of relationships. FHSU has created and nurtured that space for me and my siblings, and for our kids."

I often talk about the ethic of care that is at the heart of this university. In Patrick's words, "Fort Hays State is far more than an institution of learning. It's like a longtime friend. You can recount and reminisce with other Tigers about all of the wonderful people who made a difference in your life and the lives of so many others. Through people who actually cared for me and my family on campus and off. We thrived as a family in large part because this university provided all of the right components to create the best and get the best from people."

The philanthropy of the McGinnis family is given with a strong desire to offer students the opportunity to share in the amazing culture of Fort Hays State University that each McGinnis uniquely experienced. They are investing in a culture they believe will create many generations of graduates who will go forward, embracing our ethic of care, along with a willingness to sacrifice for one another and challenge each other.

The generosity of the McGinnis family runs deep – from their investment in our students and programs to the many ways they serve this community with love and selflessness. The McGinnis family freely offers friendship and hope to anyone with whom they interact.

I end this column with the words Patrick chose to end his remarks, quoting John Denver, as Patrick and John ask each of us to challenge one another to reach for the heavens and hope for the future, for all that we can be, not just what we are. Thank you, Patrick and the McGinnis family, for your legacy and your love.

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