

Thursday, Nov 12, 2015

Meaningful Impact: OU Distinguished Volunteers Recognized on National Philanthropy Day

On November 12, 2015, two of OU's most distinguished volunteers, John F. Mills and Gary W. Laidlaw, will be honored. John Mills will receive the recognition posthumously.

National Philanthropy Day is the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) of Greater Detroit's premier event honoring the outstanding contributions that philanthropists, distinguished volunteers, and those in the fundraising profession have made to enrich the Southeast Michigan community. The reception will be held at the COBO Center.

Distinguished Volunteers are the advocates, leaders, and mentors whose passion for their respective causes inspire philanthropic action and community involvement. They are nominated by local organizations to recognize the time and energy that each volunteer devotes to the day-to-day operations and successes of their organization.

Nominating organizations choose a descriptive word for each volunteer. John Mills's word is "dedicated." A 1972 graduate of Oakland University, Mills

immediately began to support the University while studying for his Juris Doctorate. A prominent attorney, longtime member and chair of the Alumni Association, and 1982 Distinguished Alumni Service Award recipient, John continued his faithful service to the University as a director of the Oakland University Foundation until his death in July 2014.

About his friend, Gary Laidlaw says, "John for his entire life was a guiding force for the university. He was never shy about speaking up on boards. He was always heavily involved and did a great job."

Gary Laidlaw's descriptive word is "leader." Laidlaw, a 1964 bachelor's and master's graduate of Oakland University and retired corporate banking executive, has volunteered his expertise across the University for decades. A 1998 recipient of the Distinguished Alumni Service Award, Laidlaw's service to the University stretches from driver for OU founder Matilda Wilson to longstanding and present-day director of the OU Foundation.

"I've been on a mission to pay back the university since 1961. I've been on a lot of committees and groups over the years. Since I could attend on a scholarship I feel I should pay back the university not vice versa," says Laidlaw. He adds, "I demonstrate my commitment by recruiting family members — there's 27 of us who attended OU!"

OU extends a heartfelt thanks to these wonderful volunteers who deserve recognition for their many decades of service to the University.



John Mills, 1972 graduate of Oakland University, will be honored posthumously on National Philanthropy Day.



Gary and Ann Laidlaw