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Bringing dreams alive: Endowment honors professor's passion for international travel

Teaching and traveling were Catherine (Kate) Tyler's passions. That's why her husband and children established the Catherine Tyler Memorial International Award Endowment shortly after she died in a scuba diving accident in 2007.

As an assistant professor of management in Oakland University's School of Business Administration since fall 2001, Kate influenced students' lives by sharing her international expertise and encouraging them to explore the world.

"Kate knew that a U.S.-centric focus was not going to serve her students very well. She also realized that international expertise couldn't be learned from a textbook or a filmstrip. She wanted students to experience it firsthand," says Mike, Kate's husband. "Until students walk through the slums of Mumbai or wander through a Chinese Hutong, they can't really appreciate the differences."

Kate led by example when it came to immersing herself in other cultures. She traveled extensively with family, friends and students. She also taught at the Vienna University of Technology in Austria, and the University for Business and Technology in Pristina, Kosovo. Moreover, she was recognized for her international aspects of teaching and management, as demonstrated by her published works in respected publications.

"When the funeral home asked if we'd like to receive donations in lieu of flowers, it only took a couple of seconds for us to think of Oakland University," Mike says. As support from family, friends and colleagues flowed in, Mike worked with OU SBA to create an endowment, which provides continuous income for an annual student award.

"Outside her family, teaching and traveling were Kate's passions," says Mike. "She was all about being with the students, whether it was in the classroom or in a foreign country. That's what makes this award so appropriate."

Kate's colleague agrees. "I think the award is just what she would have wanted. It combines two of her favorite things – teaching and travel," says Mark Simon, associate professor of management, SBA.

Thanks to this endowment, Kate's passion for teaching and traveling will continue to impact OU SBA students for years to come. Specifically, the award will provide support for undergraduate and graduate students who participate in university-approved international internships or study abroad experiences. Awards may be used for tuition, air fare, lodging or other related expenses.

"I am grateful for the many people who have donated money so her name can live on at the university," Mike says. "It's meaningful for her parents, our children, and me to know she won't be forgotten."

To contribute to the memorial endowment online at www.sba.oakland.edu/give or contact Robin Michel, SBA development officer, at michel@oakland.edu or (248) 370-2121.

By Kathy Pomaville Pate (CAS '90) a freelance writer from Iowa.

SUMMARY

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