Growing a Legacy: Alumna Recognizes Importance of Perpetual Support

As a student at the University of Southern Indiana, Nancy Sieben Koehler ‘93 was homecoming queen, vice president of Student Government Association for two years, a member of Delta Zeta, a volunteer for the University’s first capital campaign, and a student worker in the Romain College of Business. She attended USI on an academic scholarship and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in communication.

Koehler never left Deaconess after that internship. Following the successful golf event, Deaconess offered her the position of annual giving coordinator. Three years later, at the age of 25, she became executive director of the Deaconess Foundation. In her 20 years at Deaconess, Koehler has led the Foundation to record growth, tripling the donor base and initiating new events and opportunities.

“I always joke that I’ve never actually applied for a job,” Koehler said. “I have been very fortunate, and I have USI to thank for that. It was through the University that I was able to connect with Deaconess.”

As a student worker in the Romain College of Business, Koehler learned a lot about fundraising from her mentor, Nancy Bizal, instructor in business communication. Koehler worked with Bizal developing relationships, forming and facilitating the Board of Advisors; developing, writing, and editing the College newsletter; writing appeal and congratulatory letters; establishing and implementing an alumni event; and connecting faculty and students to the business community.

“It was through her involvement at the University that she obtained her first job with the Deaconess Foundation. Former USI basketball coach Bruce Pearl recruited Koehler for an internship with Deaconess, where she raised funds and organized the annual Cystic Fibrosis Golf Classic.

“I didn’t even want the internship!” Koehler said. “I didn’t need the credit hours, but Bruce kept asking and I finally said yes.”

“Nancy and I not only share a name; we also share a passion for establishing relationships and strengthening the organizations for which we work and the community in which we live,” Bizal said. “She is a standard bearer for the University. I am so proud of her professionally and personally, and am honored she calls me her ‘Evansville mom’.”

In recognition of her involvement with USI, Koehler received the Alumni Service Award in 2001. She has been a USI Foundation Board

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Leave A Legacy® is a community-based effort that encourages people from all walks of life and all income levels to make gifts from their estates to the nonprofit organizations of their choice. This program is sponsored in Evansville by the Partnership for Philanthropic Planning through the Evansville Area Fundraising Council.

"I believe if you have the capacity, then you have the responsibility," Koehler said.

"USI gave me a great start, and I want to give back to my University."

Several years ago, Koehler included USI in her will, and hopes her peers will follow her example.

"I want people to see this and realize how important and easy it is to support USI after you are gone," Koehler said. “You don’t need to be old and wealthy. Your will is a living document. We are giving a percentage to USI. As our estate grows, our legacy to the University grows with it.”

Last year, Koehler was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer in her spinal cord. Currently, there is no real treatment or cure for this type of debilitating tumor. “It really brought things into focus for us,” said Koehler. “Supporting causes that have real value has become even more important to our family.”

Koehler is married to David Koehler, a physician with Deaconess Hospital, with whom she has three sons — eight-year-old David, whom Koehler says is “really bright,” pointing out that he is currently reading the Harry Potter series; six-year-old William, who is “going to be the best husband,” she says. “He is so compassionate and helpful.” And three-year-old Samuel, who is “just spoiled rotten!” Koehler says.

Koehler is currently on the alumni major gifts committee of the USI Foundation Board of Directors; serves as vice president of Youth Resources of Southern Indiana; is an ambassador to Highland School for the Rotary Club of Evansville; a sustainer for the Junior League of Evansville; holds membership in A Network of Evansville Women (ANEW), Evansville Area Fundraising Council, Vanderburgh Medical Alliance, and the Association for Healthcare Philanthropy; is a board member for the Buffalo Trace Council Boy Scouts of America; and serves on the Women’s Hospital Advisory Board.

Wills and other estate plans
A gift in your will or other estate plan to the USI Foundation can result in significant tax savings to your estate and will benefit students pursuing higher education.

Your annual gifts can continue forever
USI depends on loyal friends and alumni who make annual gifts which help underwrite scholarships and enhance its educational programs. When a benefactor dies, then that support ends.

Continue your commitment to support higher education by including the USI Foundation in your will. You can create a permanent legacy. Here is how to accomplish that:

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*Assumes an average annual rate of return of 4.5% on bequests received by the USI Foundation.

Concerned about the level of your Social Security income? Would you like to have more income and help USI at the same time? Call the USI Foundation and ask how you can do both with a charitable gift annuity.

For more information or other gift-planning ideas, return the enclosed reply card or contact the USI Foundation.

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