

# Women for OSU

SPRING 2015 NEWSLETTER



Photos from 2015 Women for OSU Symposium

# AnnHargis

## FIRST COWGIRL

In December 2014, OSU concluded the historic *Branding Success* campaign. Thanks to so many, OSU is home to improved buildings, more students and faculty, and more creative and innovative programs. With more than 100,000 donors (45,000 of whom are first-time donors) and exceeding \$1.2 billion in gifts and pledges, we have momentum and enthusiasm!

The OSU family has been blessed with amazing people since the earliest days of Oklahoma A&M College. And in many ways, the family has grown in character just as it has grown in size. The young people attending classes today exhibit that legacy with their dedication to success as people and professionals. That is so apparent when students speak at events such as the Women for OSU Symposiums. They are truly heartwarming, but most importantly they reinforce my optimism about the future of this university. I believe these young philanthropists of today will lead their communities to a brighter orange tomorrow.



The Women for OSU inspire me to take advantage of every unique opportunity for philanthropy I have as First Cowgirl. We constantly remind others – which constantly reminds me – that we all have some time, talent or treasure that can make a difference. And together, our efforts are *changing our world*.

Sincerely,

Ann Hargis



Visit [OSUgiving.com/Women/AnnHargis](https://OSUgiving.com/Women/AnnHargis)  
for Ann's video interview



# BillieMcKnight

## 2015 PHILANTHROPIST *of the* YEAR

**Billie (Gaskins) McKnight gives back because she can't imagine not doing what she can to help others.** That philanthropic mindset has greatly benefitted so many others throughout her life.

McKnight grew up in Davis, Oklahoma, and joined both of her parents in choosing OSU. That is where she met her future husband, Ross, during her freshman year of 1969. In 1973, she earned a business administration degree before they married and moved to Throckmorton, Texas. There they have built extremely successful careers in ranching, oil and gas, and banking. They also raised two children, Trent and Meggan, who are third-generation OSU alumni.

McKnight has dedicated countless hours to helping her neighbors in Throckmorton, which has a population of less than 850. She served in leadership roles on the school board and the Band Boosters and Parents' Club. She founded Community Closet to provide clothing

to those in need, and organized a Christmas Angels program through several churches to purchase gifts for community children.

She is a founding member of the Annie Oakley Society, an Annie's Legacy member and on the Annie Oakley Society Leadership Team of the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum.

She and her husband co-chaired the transformational *Branding Success* campaign at OSU, which surpassed \$1.2 billion for students, faculty, facilities and programs. They also established the McKnight Leader Scholars Program in 2010. It provides scholarships and unique leadership-development opportunities for 50 out-of-state students each year.

Their son, Trent, lives in Throckmorton. Their daughter, Meggan, lives in Fort Worth, Texas, with her husband, Blake Panzino, and sons, Mac, 3, and Pierce, 1.



Billie McKnight (center) is surrounded by her family. From left are her husband, Ross; son, Trent; daughter, Meggan; and son-in-law, Blake Panzino.

# Women OSU

## 2015

### SYMPOSIUM .....Recap



“ Though some may think I live in a world of silence, silence is the **last thing** the world will ever hear from me.”

— *Marlee Matlin*





A record crowd of 413 packed the Student Union Ballroom for the seventh annual Women for OSU Symposium on April 16. **Jennifer Zeppelin** of Tulsa's KTUL-TV served as master of ceremonies. First Cowgirl **Ann Hargis** provided an OSU update. **Becky Steen**, chair of Women for OSU, then spoke about the group's progress. Council Member **Roxanne Pollard** introduced **Billie McKnight** as Philanthropist of the Year. Council Members **Sharon Trojan** and **Connie Mitchell** recognized the **seven students** who received a combined **\$31,250** in Women for OSU scholarships.



The scholarship recipients, from left, are: multimedia journalism sophomore **Julia Benbrook** from Woodward; nurse science sophomore **Mayra Castanon** from Oklahoma City; entrepreneurship and marketing junior **Kourtney Brooks** from Tuttle; crime victim/survivor services sophomore **Roxanne Cobb** from Conway, Arkansas; accounting junior **Allison Meinders** from Woodward; enterprise development sophomore **Amanda Sandoval** from Oklahoma City; and human development and family science senior **Macy Hula** from Enid.

For more information on the students' academic and philanthropic achievements as well as a video feature about the group, please visit [OSUgiving.com/symposium2015](http://OSUgiving.com/symposium2015).

**Marlee Matlin** delivered the keynote speech, discussing her **Academy Award-winning** acting career and advocacy for the hearing impaired. She reminded attendees to focus on abilities rather than disabilities and taught the group American Sign Language for "**courage plus dreams equals success.**"



## 2016 SYMPOSIUM

featuring

**Laura Bush**

**Thursday, April 14, 2016**

9:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

**NEW LOCATION:** Wes Watkins Center  
OSU Campus, Stillwater, Oklahoma



JAMI LONGACRE



BECKY STEEN



PEGGY WELCH

## WOMEN FOR OSU COUNCIL LEADS ORGANIZATION'S SUCCESS

It takes a talented, dedicated and generous group of women to establish a philanthropic organization and lead it with purpose to quickly achieve impressive success. In the case of Women for Oklahoma State University, the current and former Council Members have consistently set lofty goals and then exceeded them over the past six years.

For example, the organization has awarded 29 scholarships totaling \$105,250. It has also hosted thousands of alumni and friends at its various events, including capacity crowds at all seven annual Symposiums. **The individuals who have attended Women for OSU events are extremely generous, having contributed more than \$340 million in lifetime gifts and commitments to the university, including more than \$1.5 million for funds supporting the Women for OSU program and scholarships.**

It all starts with the members of the Council, who represent families with an established giving history of at least \$50,000 to OSU. The Council operates in conjunction with OSU Foundation staff to develop ways to inspire and engage women who love the university, and they serve as role models for philanthropic leadership. That includes an additional commitment of \$1,000 annually to support Women for OSU's programs and scholarships.

"The Council serves as the catalyst for accomplishing our goals of moving the scholarship and fundraising forward," says Becky Steen, who joined the Council in 2010 and began a two-year term as the organization's chair in July 2014. "It is the engine that drives the connection between OSU and women who want to become involved and give back to the university."

Peggy Welch, who has been on the Council since 2008, says she is continually impressed by the women who form this volunteer group. She looks forward to their meetings, which occur three to four times annually.

"These ladies have all made a big financial investment in the university, and they also show a high level of personal commitment," says Welch, the past chair of the events committee. "This is not a board where you just show up to meetings. They offer their homes to host events. They travel all over to root for the student-athletes. They serve on many advisory boards for different segments of the university."

She adds, "They are coming from all different directions and are so generous with their time and resources to work for the common goal of scholarships and encouraging philanthropy."

Jami Longacre, chair of the marketing committee, joined the Council in 2013. She says she has never been part of a group so united in its focus.

**"I saw volunteering with Women for OSU as an opportunity to not only collaborate with other ladies and really support OSU through scholarships, but also as a tool to recruit additional donors that may not have participated before,"** Longacre says. "It's a way to get more women involved in philanthropy and giving back to the university that has helped us all so much."

Along with the marketing and events committee, the group also features committees focused on fundraising, awards and nominations. The organization has recently



undergone some changes such as updating its official guiding documents and logo, with the goal of continuing the momentum established by its founders.

**“The founding Council members were dedicated women and established leaders in their communities and in philanthropy,” Steen says. “They were a vital part of our history, and we are grateful for their continued active participation in our future.”**

As Women for OSU looks toward the future, it is pursuing ways to ensure the organization’s continued relevance and growth. One focus is diversifying the Council so that women of various ages, degrees and professional backgrounds are involved.

“We want a broad section of women to get involved,” Steen says. “Over the past several years we have had a number of new Council members join us, and their specific talents have allowed them to plug into different areas and really contribute a great deal to help the committees move forward.”

Members of the Council say the group’s diversity – in every sense – is one of its most appealing traits, as well as a major reason it succeeds.

“We are all in different places in our lives,” Longacre says. “That is extremely beneficial because it keeps the organization fresh and brings in different ideas and different perspectives. We have women who have been around from the beginning, and we also have women who will continue the legacy of giving back to the university through philanthropy and scholarships.”

Steen says Women for OSU is focused on connecting with its next generation of leaders.

“That is why we are considering several ways for younger women to get involved,” Steen says. “You can see from our scholarship recipients that when younger philanthropists are connected, they establish stronger ties throughout their lives.”

For example, of the 29 students who have received Women for OSU scholarships, 21 have made gifts to the OSU Foundation, with those commitments exceeding \$9,400. That reflects the recently adopted mission and vision of the organization.

“Women for OSU is a diverse group of visionary women who share a passion for inspiring leadership and financial support to Oklahoma State University,” it reads. “Women for OSU envisions a culture of giving and service that acknowledges the significant impact women have at OSU and inspires others to positively shape the future of the University through philanthropy and engagement.”

Welch adds, “It’s a lifestyle, really – to give because you have been given to, because you are able to, and because you want to.”

For more information about the Council, please contact Michal Shaw at [mshaw@OSUgiving.com](mailto:mshaw@OSUgiving.com).

“ The Council serves as the catalyst for accomplishing our goals of moving the scholarship and fundraising forward. It is the engine that drives the connection between OSU and women who want to become involved and give back to the university.”

— BECKY STEEN

# THANK You!

Our generous sponsors are crucial to the ongoing success of the annual Women for OSU Symposium. Their support empowers us to book world-renowned speakers such as **Laura Bush** and **Marlee Matlin** while awarding more scholarships each year. Here are the people and organizations whose financial contributions helped make the 2015 Symposium such a great event.

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