

BEHIND THE GIFTS: MAKING A SPLASH

By Nicolle Kain (LA'22, M'22)

"It's not a four-year decision but rather a 40-year decision."

Lisa (Dolansky) Conner (HHS'03, LA'03) remembers this mantra from her days as a Purdue swimmer. It's part of what motivated her and her husband, Greg (M'05), to establish a scholarship endowment to support Purdue swimming and diving.

"To us, Purdue is not just a place you attend for four years—it's a lifetime experience," Greg says. "Purdue provided us with a first-class education that has allowed us to achieve much success, and now it's our turn to pay it forward."

The Greg and Lisa Conner Swimming Endowment will cover out-of-state tuition and room and board for one member of the Purdue women's swimming team annually. Once fully funded, this scholarship will continue in perpetuity, helping Purdue swimming and diving for years to come. "It is our hope that this scholarship finds itself in the hands of future hardworking young women, like Lisa, that may not otherwise be able to attend Purdue," Greg says.

Greg has been a "Boilermaker since birth," with deep family connections to the university. "Choosing Purdue was one of the easiest and best decisions of my life," he says.

Originally from New Jersey, Lisa had dreams of attending a Big Ten school. A talented swimmer, she had several offers from other colleges, but in the end, she chose the old gold and black. "I felt like Purdue really wanted me to be part of its program, and that really resonated with me," she says.

Just prior to official signing day, Lisa tore her ACL. She called Purdue, fully expecting her scholarship to be revoked. To her surprise, head coach Cathy Wright Eger reassured her that her injury would heal and that the entire team couldn't wait for her to get to campus. "I was so motivated by Cathy's confidence in me," Lisa says. "I know other coaches would have gone in a different direction. This is just another reason Purdue means so much to me."

Greg and Lisa met at the Boilermaker Aquatic Center in the fall of 2001. Greg was a sportswriter for the *Purdue Exponent* and was assigned to write a feature story on Lisa. "I must have written some good things in that article," Greg says. "The rest is history." The two are now happily married with four children—all swimmers.

"Today, our best memories of Purdue are spending time with our entire family on campus," the Conners share. "For the past few years, we've had the privilege of watching our kids compete at the Morgan J. Burke Aquatic Center as members of the Noblesville Swim Club. When we walk in the doors, so many wonderful memories instantly come back to us, but hopefully the best memories are yet to come."

Greg and Lisa are excited to see their scholarship's impact on Purdue swimming and diving, a program that means so much to them.

“If not for the athletic scholarship that was provided to Lisa, she most likely would not have been able to come to Purdue,” Greg explains. “Without that scholarship, there’s not a Greg and Lisa. We’ve talked about doing something like this for a very long time but envisioned it being much later in life. We are so appreciative to Purdue for Life and the John Purdue Club for allowing us to structure this gift in a way that works with our family’s current financial position.”

“The importance of being part of something larger than oneself and giving back to an institution that has provided so much to us are views we want to instill in our children,” Lisa says. “Our kids seeing our gift and how it will positively impact the lives of student athletes will benefit not only Purdue but also our own family.”

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