

BEHIND THE GIFTS: ON A MISSION

By Katie Donworth

Not many Boilermakers can claim “going to space” as their next giant leap. Although nearly a third of all U.S. spaceflights have included a Purdue graduate, fewer than 30 Purdue alumni have *astronaut* or *spacefarer* linked with their names.

Marc Hagle (ECE’71, MS M’72), president and CEO of Tricor International, made his leap into space on March 29 aboard Blue Origin’s NS-20 alongside his wife, Sharon, and four other crew members. Their flight distinguished the Hagles as the first married couple on a commercial spaceflight.

“Emotionally, there’s really no words to describe it,” Marc says. “When you’re floating in space and looking at the black darkness—compared to the small blue circle of Earth—it has an impact on you personally. I’m proud to be in a long line of Purdue graduates advancing the mission of exploring the galaxy.”

Marc revealed his Purdue pride in what he brought with him on his space journey: a stuffed replica of the Big Bass Drum, an homage to his days playing percussion in the Purdue “All-American” Marching Band, including during Purdue’s 14–13 victory at the 1967 Rose Bowl.

“The band was one of the reasons that I went to Purdue,” Marc says. “Everybody who participates in Bands & Orchestras has an opportunity that will affect them for the rest of their lives. It is a terrific character-building experience, and the dedication you put into it pays you back in personal reward many times over.”

Marc’s formative years on the drum line inspired the Hagles to make a leadership gift for Marc and Sharon Hagle Hall, the new home of Purdue Bands & Orchestras.

“There has been talk about a new facility since I came to Purdue in 1995,” says Jay Gephart, the Al G. Wright Chair, director of bands, and professor of music. “It took Marc and Sharon’s personal involvement, generosity, and drive to put our dream on the fast track. This building is the game changer we’ve needed to take our giant leap forward as a program. That’s how important Marc and Sharon’s lead gift is. This facility will transform the way our students learn and how this department operates.”

Investing in all aspects of STEM students’ experiences is a core part of the Hagles’ mission. Sharon is the CEO of SpaceKids Global, which she founded in 2015 with the goal of inspiring STEAM+ (science, technology, engineering, art, mathematics, and environment) education and empowering girls. She has reached more than 100,000 students, including children at Purdue’s Space Day.

“I think kids need to understand that they can do it,” Sharon says. “You can dream big. Use your imagination; be curious. And dreams can come true.”