

Powerful Matching Gifts Create Permanent Legacies

WHAT UNIVERSITY GIFTS allow far better than many other forms of philanthropy are a way to honor as well as augment, an opportunity to celebrate one and uplift others, a legacy that lives on beyond today. These gifts are remarkable for their ripple effects in the lives of students, especially when they are amplified through a matching program.

For the Reisman family, a \$125,000 gift to the 2023 GW Law Scholarship Endowment Match in the name of Noah Benjamin Reisman presented the family with another way to celebrate Noah's jubilant if brief life, while also illuminating a path forward for law students who would come after him.

"GW Law's matching program appealed to us," said Steven J. Reisman, Noah's father and a partner at Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP in New York. "This is a good opportunity to give back. If someone else is willing to contribute, we should be willing to contribute to support an institution that bestowed on Noah an excellent education and a chance to be part of the *Law Review*."

Twenty-six-year-old Noah,



who died in a tragic accident in September 2020, attended GW Law for a single year, but he did much in his time on campus. He excelled academically, making the *GW Law Review*, and formed lasting friendships with his peers. To be closer to home, Port Washington, New York, he transferred to Columbia Law School before his 2L year.

Noah's family—parents Steven and Elizabeth

Reisman, his brother Sam, and his sister Rachel—believed that his experience in Washington would have been formative in shaping the kind of lawyer he hoped to be. Noah, who had a love of politics, also served on the advance team for Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton during her presidential bid in 2016.

"This allows his name to live on through the scholarship and in helping other

people, because Noah would have done that with his life," Reisman said. "He can't be here now, so we have to do it for him. We have to help people the way we know he would have."

Dean Dayna Bowen Matthew, the Harold H. Greene Professor of Law, says matching gifts like the one given by the Reisman family are essential in helping to support the next generation of legal leaders, and she believes philanthropy honoring the lives of family members and colleagues who have passed honors and preserves memories.

"What a wonderful way to honor Noah's memory and his love for the law," said Matthew. "His family obviously believes as we do that the opportunity to study law where laws are made in Washington should be accessible to everyone who has the same passion for law that their son had."

The 2023 GW Law Scholarship Endowment Match was launched with \$500,000 in dollar-for-dollar matching funds to double gifts for endowed, need-based, and merit-based scholarships for JD students and Energy and Environmental Law LLM students. The effect of the matching program will be significant, accelerating investments in GW Law scholarships and offering new levels of support for students.

Matching donors could create endowed scholarships in the name of their honorees, with a gift of \$50,000 or more to be matched by the law school to meet or exceed the minimum scholarship endowment threshold of \$100,000. Benefactors could also

opt to increase an existing endowed scholarship to

- continued



Steven Reisman \$125k
(for a total \$250k with
match) for JD students



Match in memory of
beloved late Professor
Dmitry Karshedt
(pictured) by
Ilya Karshedt
\$70k (for a total
\$140k with match) for
JD students



Doug Davidson two
matches, one with Earle
O'Donnell: \$50k (for a total
\$100k with match) for JD
students, and \$30k (for a
total \$60k match) for Energy
and Environmental Law
LLM students



Professor Stephen Schooner
\$50k (for a total \$100k with
match) for JD students



GuyLaine Charles
\$50k (for a total \$100k with
match) for JD students

Powerful Matching - *continued*

meet or exceed the \$100,000 endowment threshold.

The matching challenge proved especially attractive to a number of donors who recognized the benefit of leveraging their contributions to improve access to law school for the next generation of lawyers but also for creating a permanent legacy.

Ira Lee "Ike" Sorkin, JD '68, a partner at Mintz & Gold, was drawn to the idea that more need-based scholarships could be provided through a gift that was matched by GW Law.

Sorkin, who focuses his practice on white collar criminal defense, SEC enforcement, and other regulatory investigations and proceedings, said his time at GW Law had been formative for his career by giving him access to excellent professors and courses. "Law school was the bedrock of my career, and I thoroughly enjoyed it," said Sorkin, who gave \$50,000 (for a total \$100,00 match) for students pursuing a JD. "I want to give someone else that opportunity."

John Lewis, Jr., JD '90, who recently was named the managing partner of Shook, Hardy & Bacon's Houston office, also remembers that his GW Law professors were impactful to his career. Lewis and his wife, Suandria, decided to make a matching gift in honor of John's parents, who raised him in the Greater Fifth Ward community of Houston. From these humble beginnings, Lewis became an acclaimed trial lawyer and

business strategist, serving as litigation counsel for the Coca-Cola Co. and leading one of the oldest and largest law firms in Texas.

For Earle O'Donnell, JD '75, and his wife Catherine, the matching fund allowed them to double down on their already impactful gifts to the law school. In 2012, the O'Donnells established a charitable remainder unitrust to benefit GW Law, providing an income stream until they both pass away. The Earle and Catherine O'Donnell Endowed Law Scholarship and The Earle and Catherine O'Donnell Annual Scholarship support high-need financial aid.

"When I started practicing law, I found out that I was as well-prepared as any graduate out there, and, truth be told, better than most," said O'Donnell, who was the head of White & Case LLP's Energy Markets and Regulatory Practice prior to his retirement. "As time went on, Cathy and I were able to make more positive financial contributions and give back to the law school in ways that would help more and more students."

In 2023, the O'Donnells and Douglas E. Davidson, JD '71, are offering gifts to underwrite scholarships for talented students seeking an LLM in Energy and Environmental Law—students who have a passion for the discipline. Each will give \$30,000 in matching funds

(\$25,000 for the endowment and \$5,000 for current use) to maximize resources and help students today and in the future (see sidebar).

"We decided to collectively contribute more for current use funds," said O'Donnell, "because we wanted the money to be available in year one and two for this program, and then the endowment takes over after that. It's important to get to the finish line, but it's equally important to get to the starting line."

Even as matching donors work to reach the starting line for GW Law students based on their commitment to their alma mater, others were moved by loss to support the 2023 GW Law Scholarship Endowment Match.

GuyLaine Charles, founder of Charles Law PLLC, was inspired to donate to the match fund in memory of Theresa "Teri" Brunzman, JD '86, a passionate GW Law alum who passed away in March 2023.

"She was an amazing lawyer and an incredible role model for all attorneys around her," said Charles, of her industry colleague. "We thought it would be great to have a scholarship named after her and to encourage people to follow in her footsteps of working towards a more equitable future. It was very important for us to remember her."

Brunzman was vice president and associate general counsel at Nuveen, the

investment manager of TIAA, where she focused on legal issues related to ERISA, derivatives, collective investment trusts, and regulatory changes related to those areas. She had a long career, working at Aegon Asset Management, Invesco, and as an internal counsel at life insurance companies in her hometown of Cincinnati, Ohio.

Charles and other colleagues in the industry have donated \$50,000, for a total of \$100,000 after the match, and have stipulated that the scholarship be granted to first-generation students who have shown a focus on inclusivity.

Charles said Brunzman had deep experience in the financial industry, and she was passionate about education, which made the scholarship a natural choice. Brunzman, who served on the *Journal of International Law and Economics*, was proud of attending GW Law on a full-tuition scholarship as well as graduating with honors.

During the depths of the pandemic, Charles had come to rely on her regular calls with Brunzman to bring a voice of humor and understanding across the distance. "We worked together during COVID," she said. "She was very wise, and I ended up speaking to her more than anyone other than my husband."

"We found there were many different reasons our generous donors participated in the 2023 GW Law Scholarship Endowment Match—each of them personal, all of them purposeful," said Dean Matthew. "We're determined to live up to the challenge of making all of them meaningful, for our donors, for the law school, and for our students."

– Sarah Kellogg



John Lewis, Jr.
\$50k (for a total
\$100k with match)
for JD students



Greg Bingham
\$50k (for a total
\$100k with match)
for JD students



Ike Sorkin \$50k
(for a total \$100k
with match) for
JD students



Earle O'Donnell match
with Doug Davidson
\$30k (for a total \$60k
with match) for Energy
and Environmental Law
LLM students

Energizing Support for LLMs

THE PROFESSIONAL RIVALRY between Douglas E. Davidson, JD '71, and Earle H. O'Donnell, JD '75, was as intense as it could get in the past when they were negotiating deals between utilities and independent developers, but today the two men are spearheading a powerful commitment to GW Law and its Environmental and Energy Law program.

"Earle and I have a long history," said Davidson, a member of the Dean's Energy Law Advisory Council and a former partner at Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP. "We were

on opposite sides of a number of transactions back when we were both practicing. This goes back to the 1980s in the utility sector. We developed a great deal of respect for each other."

The two men each agreed to give \$30,000 (\$25,000 for the endowment and \$5,000 for current use) in support of the 2023 GW Law Scholarship Endowment Match. The dollar-for-dollar matching fund is generating support for endowed, need-based, and merit-based scholarships. Their combined \$60,000

in matching funds will be equaled by GW Law, and are earmarked for Environmental and Energy Law LLM students, said O'Donnell, who also sits on the Energy Law Advisory Council.

Both men were inspired to give by their conversations with Donna Attanasio, GW Law's former assistant dean for energy law. Discussing the challenges facing students who want to come to GW for the Environmental and Energy Law LLM program, they learned that there have not been nearly enough need- or merit-based scholarships to support them.

"GW is in a unique location and has the quality to

offer many opportunities to students interested in energy law," said O'Donnell, who with his wife Catherine has established several GW Law scholarships. "We don't want finances to stand in the way. We want to help with the finances and let the law school do what it does so well."

Davidson, who also contributed \$50,000 (for a total \$100,000 match) for need- and merit-based scholarships for JD students, said the matching fund was particularly attractive because donors could double the impact of their funds. "Thanks to the matching program, all our contributions end up being just that much larger," said Davidson.

Framing a Professional and Personal Legacy

FOR CHARLES “CHARLIE” Berardesco, JD ’83, GW Law has been much more than a place where he spent a few years a lifetime ago. It has been and continues to be a touchstone, reflecting his commitment to the law, his sense of duty to new generations of law students and lawyers, and a place for his professional legacy to take root and grow.

Toward that goal, Berardesco has increased his bequest to the law school to \$8 million, which has been set aside to support the Dean’s Fund and to realize the Berardesco & Thurston Endowed Scholarship. The gift comes from Berardesco and his husband Jeffrey Thurston, who have been active donors to a number of charitable organizations, including choral societies and educational institutions.

Berardesco’s major gift has come after decades of service as a GW Law alum, including vital contributions such as helping select a new dean for the law school (twice) and assisting in the formulation of the school’s strategic plan. A member of the Dean’s Advisory Council, he also served as Grand Marshal at this year’s GW Law Commencement.

“I was very fortunate because I did not come from a family of means, and yet I was financially



Charlie Berardesco

supported through my years in undergrad and law school,” said Berardesco, who served as managing editor of *The George Washington Law Review*. “Most of the work I’ve done at the law school has been around making the experience better for students. How do we help students financially and help them get jobs after graduation? The driver of my philanthropy and alumni work has always come from my experience as a student and a lawyer.”

Retired now, Berardesco had a distinguished career at the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC), which included serving as its interim president and chief executive officer. His work there followed a long career with Constellation Energy, where he served as senior vice president, general counsel, corporate secretary, and chief compliance officer.

Before his time at Constellation, Berardesco practiced law in-house and with firms for nearly 20 years. He served as vice president, general counsel, and corporate secretary of Fusura, and senior vice president, general counsel, and corporate secretary of HCIA. He was counsel with Piper Rudnick (now DLA Piper), where his practice included corporate finance and mergers and acquisitions, and a partner at Whiteford, Taylor, and Preston, where he served as chair of the corporate department and as a member of its executive committee.

Berardesco is a firm believer in finding a particular passion in the law and then following that passion professionally, no matter what a student might have studied in law school. “You’ve got to like being a lawyer because if not, it’s way too hard a way to make a living,” said Berardesco.

“Everyone doesn’t need to be the same kind of lawyer or do the same kind of law. You need to know what you want to do and what gets you going. If you don’t get something out of it, something for yourself in terms of psychic satisfaction and excitement and interest to help get you up in the morning, then your career may not head where you want it.”

– Sarah Kellogg

Paying It Forward

EUGENE GORRIN, JD ’81, IS a New Jersey boy, born and bred, so it isn’t a surprise that he decided to honor GW Law students from his home state by creating the Eugene Gorrin Memorial Law Scholarship. The endowed scholarship was established to support GW Law students who attended a public high school or public college in New Jersey.

“I went to a public high school and a public university, Rutgers, in New Jersey,” said Gorrin. “That’s where I wanted my first preference to focus for potential scholarship candidates because I had benefited so much from a public education myself.”

A recently retired attorney whose practice focused on tax, wills, trusts and estates, and business matters, Gorrin is leaving a significant percentage of his estate and retirement assets to GW Law for the scholarship. “The cost of attending law school today

“ I WANT TO GIVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO PEOPLE WHO DON’T COME FROM A WEALTHY BACKGROUND, AND WHO DON’T HAVE THE FINANCIAL WHEREWITHAL TO BE ABLE TO GET A QUALITY EDUCATION AT A QUALITY LAW SCHOOL LIKE GW LAW. ”

– Eugene Gorrin



Eugene Gorrin

is much higher than it was when I attended GW Law. I want to give an opportunity to people who don't come from a wealthy background, and who don't have the financial wherewithal to be able to get a quality education at a quality law school like GW Law," he said.

Gorrin said he kept the scholarship focused on geography rather than legal disciplines because he knows that law students are usually too green to know what part of the law will appeal to them in the end. They aren't familiar enough with the law or their personalities as lawyers to make those decisions so early.

"You don't know what career path you're going to take," he said. "You don't know what courses you're going to like or what area of the law you're going to like. Once you've built up your skills, and worked as a clerk or a summer associate for a law firm, or even spent the first couple of years handling various types of legal matters, that's when you're finally getting a sense of what area or areas of the law you might want to pursue."

Gorrin has followed through on his commitment to "pay it forward" at all his former universities. Along with GW Law, he's set up a scholarship at Rutgers for

undergraduates and a scholarship at New York University where he earned his LLM in taxation after GW Law.

For Gorrin, tax law proved to be a good area of specialization. He was a young lawyer during the Reagan administration when there were major changes nearly every year to the Internal Revenue Code. "It was constantly changing," he said. "If it wasn't the statute, it was the regulations, rulings, notices, announcements, and other guidance issued by the Internal Revenue Service. And there were always cases being handed down by the U.S. Tax Court, U.S. District Courts, U.S. Court of Federal Claims, U.S. Circuit Courts, and occasionally the U.S. Supreme Court. You really needed to keep up."

The volume of change was so sizable and ongoing that he had a systematic professional reading schedule to track developments in the law and ever-evolving planning strategies and document drafting concepts. "I'm very organized. I kept up with all that reading for 40 years of my career," he said. "It's only been in the last couple of months since retiring that I finally stopped doing so."

As he looks back at his career, he feels especially grateful. Working at a large law firm as a partner and at smaller firms, he became the go-to guy in the firm for cases that were complicated, complex, or technical, or when a deadline was involved. "I enjoyed the role, as well as mentoring and teaching young attorneys," he said. "I did income tax planning for high-net-worth clients as well as estate planning and business planning. I learned the importance of planning for your future and for those who come after us."

- Sarah Kellogg

Purposeful Philanthropy

LESLIE AND KATHRYN

Megyeri's deep relationship with GW Law and the George Washington University began with their own in 1963. They met in a speech class in the basement of Lisner Auditorium that year and had their first date that summer at the March on Washington on the National Mall.

"We walked down to the Mall thinking we would see Peter, Paul, and Mary and Joan Baez," said Kathryn, MA '69, MA '82. "We stayed at the Lincoln Memorial to hear the Rev. Martin Luther King's 'I Have a Dream' speech. That was our first wonderful date. It was part of history. And that's why we stayed in Washington our entire lives because as Les says, 'I can't leave this place. It's the center of the universe.'"

A Hungarian refugee, Leslie, BA '63, JD '68, MBA '80, embarked on a prestigious career working in the government, sparked in part by GW Law Professor John Cibinic who helped him secure a clerkship with the U.S. General Accounting Office. Cibinic, a government contracts expert, is renowned for facilitating the founding of the academic discipline of government procurement law at GW Law in 1960.

Such a storied beginning was bound to result in a remarkable life of service and commitment from both Megyeris. Leslie retired from the U.S. House Judiciary Committee staff after working on a variety of issues, from immigration reform to government waste, including the infamous \$600 toilet seat at the Pentagon. Kathryn had a long and distinguished teaching career



Leslie and Kathryn Megyeri

that began after completing a graduate degree at the GW School of Education and Human Development. She later added a Master's in gerontology.

The Megyeri's two bequests, totaling \$6 million, will complete the Nash-Cibinic Professorship and establish the Megyeri Chair in Government Procurement Law. These professorships are among the 44 endowed faculty positions at GW Law, and they will continue to advance GW Law's national leadership in government procurement law.

"Professor Cibinic was very important in setting me off on my career," said Leslie. "And we wanted to give back in some way to the law school and the university, and to help students. We wanted to give students access to the financial support for school that I received so very long ago and that made it possible for me to attend GW."

- Sarah Kellogg