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## Elevating the Arts

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# Elevating the Arts

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Tuesday January 11, 2022

By Eric F. Spina

If the walls could talk at the nearby Marion's Piazza on Shroyer Road, I think they'd tell us a bit about why entrepreneur and philanthropist Roger Glass is such an avid supporter of the arts.

For decades, the spacious restaurant hosted cast parties for the Kenley Players who performed on Memorial Hall's stage in summer stock productions. Dozens of black-and-white photos of stars of the stage and screen, many autographed, grace those walls. In one, Roger serves a piping-hot pizza to William Shatner and Sylvia Sidney, headliners in the 1973 production of *Arsenic and Old Lace*. In another vintage photo, Roger and his father, Marion, pose with a smiling Barbara Eden, who signed it with love.

A *Dayton Daily News* reporter described these star-studded portraits on the walls as "a window into the past." I'd like to describe the soon-to-rise walls of the Roger Glass Center for the Arts as a window into the future for the visual and performing arts on our campus.

Thanks to a lead gift from Roger, a 1967 alumnus and president and CEO of the Marion's Piazza restaurant chain, and the generosity of 120 (and counting) donors, the Roger Glass Center for the Arts is expected to open its doors in the 2023-24 academic year. It's been a long time coming.

At a private groundbreaking in November, Roger talked about what the day meant to him personally — “one of the happiest of my life” — and what it meant to his alma mater: “We've been dreaming about this for so long.”

When Karen and I joined the campus community in 2016, we became faithful patrons of the arts scene. Our weekends soon filled with soaring student concerts, unforgettable theatrical performances, and riveting student-produced documentaries. Annually the University benefits from the creative artistic talents of hundreds of UD students from a variety of majors. Our orchestras include engineers, and it's not unusual for an English major to share the stage with dance and theatre majors.

At UD, the arts are for everyone — and that's intentional.

The arts make us whole. They transport us to a land of imagination and beauty. They open up a window into the joys, challenges, and dreams of humanity. A magnificent painting or performance expands our minds and touches our souls.

Roger, who majored in communication arts at UD, learned that lesson early, and now he's imparting it to generations of students.

The Roger Glass Center for the Arts will do more than just elevate the arts on campus. The arts will elevate us.