

Pam Schick Kelsey '70

50th Reunion Outstanding Service Award



For Pam Kelsey, art is an essential thread woven through a lifetime of experience — as a student, businesswoman, parent, grandparent and volunteer. Inspired by her mother, artist **Katherine Schilling Schick Lyall '40**, Pam majored in studio art at Skidmore, mixing in courses in photography, art history and calligraphy. Her creativity fueled a successful career in international conference planning for The Kelsey Group, a research and analytics firm she co-founded with her husband, John, and has allowed her to improve the quality of life for young people in diverse communities across the country. Over her decades-long service as an alumna volunteer, she has helped elevate the arts at Skidmore, on campus and beyond while honoring a four-generation family legacy.

In 1983, Pam and husband John dedicated the Schick Art Gallery in memory of her father, Robert Schick, and in honor of her mother, Kay. The Saisselin Art Building space showcases the work of students, faculty and renowned visiting artists throughout the academic year and is a centerpiece of the College's Summer Six art program.

Pam is equally proud of her involvement "in the birth" of the Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery. As an alumna trustee and member of the Building and Infrastructure Committee in the late 1990s, she interviewed and helped select distinguished architect Antoine Predock to design the museum. A campus jewel integral to the College's interdisciplinary mission, the Tang has earned high praise from artists, curators and educators worldwide.

In 1999, Pam offered to assist College staff charged with planning the inauguration of Skidmore's sixth president, Jamienne Studley. At the last minute, Hillary Clinton, then running for the U.S. Senate, reversed an earlier decision to decline the invitation. A mad scramble to satisfy her security detail ensued, requiring the entire procession to be re-routed. "Buildings had to be emptied, space cleared for a helicopter landing and a remote broadcast set up for students," Pam recalls. "I think it's the hardest I've ever worked for Skidmore," she quips.

Less dramatic but nonetheless important are the countless hours Pam logged as Skidmore's Princeton Alumni Club president, Friends of the Presidents chair and campaign volunteer. She was recognized with an Outstanding Service Award in 1995. Today, Pam celebrates her 50th Reunion as gift planning chair.

"My husband John once asked, 'What is it that has kept you so enamored of this College?' Our class didn't leave campus on a high note. John, then my fiancé, was in the Army, the Kent State tragedy was unfolding and student strikes in protest of the Vietnam War cancelled or altered graduation ceremonies nationwide. Many of us thought we'd never see one another again." Happily, the opposite held true. "My Skidmore roommates are still my best friends," she says.

Pam's personal relationships with classmates, fellow volunteers and staff have kept her coming back. But she is most grateful for the opportunity to continue a vibrant family legacy that began almost a century ago. "Four generations of my family are intimately connected to the College, starting in the 1930s with my mother and her sister, Mildred Schilling, who, sadly, died in her senior year." Pam's mother forged lifelong bonds with **Elaine Oberwager Johnson '40** and "**Nette**" **Meads Hoyt '40**, godmothers to Pam and her brother, Bart. Bart's daughter, **Allison Schick Masson '89**, and son-in-law, **Kenneth Masson '89**, are the proud parents of **Nathaniel Masson '16** and **Tenley Masson '17**. Ken's sister is **Linda Masson Bailey '84**. Pam's son, Jay, is an alumnus of Skidmore's Summer Six art program. This shared connection is an "emotional thread" deeply woven through her family's history. "My mother and father's courtship began on the old campus. Dad wore her Skidmore ring as his wedding band. John and I dated throughout my four years at the College."

Back home in New Jersey, Pam is an active, innovative volunteer. She has taught children's art classes, ran a gallery and introduced poets, weavers and dancers to her church and Princeton communities. Her artwork currently supports missions in Malawi and Myanmar. Most recently, Pam has been tucking art kits into care packages distributed to needy kids through the Trenton YMCA.

"Receiving this recognition from my alma mater means a great deal to John and me, even though we do what we do because we enjoy it," she says. "We believe in Skidmore; it's always been scrappy. So, let's roll up our sleeves and leave something for the next generation."