



CARTHAGE
COLLEGE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 28, 2024

MEDIA CONTACT:

Mike Moore, Senior Writer/Editor

mike@carthage.edu | 262-551-6021

Kenosha philanthropist Grace Kolakowski pledges \$3 million to Carthage

KENOSHA, Wis. – Longtime Kenosha resident Grace Kolakowski has committed a total of \$3 million to Carthage College, advancing three of her biggest passions: faith, the arts, and education.

The financial pledge consists of \$2 million toward planned upgrades to the aging A. F. Siebert Chapel and \$1 million toward scholarships that encourage students of color to pursue teaching careers in high-need urban schools.

The gift is part of Carthage’s ambitious fundraising campaign, titled “Light that Travels,” which went public in July. Determined to continue on its rising trajectory amid an intensely competitive era in higher education, the college established a \$100 million goal.

“For me, Grace Kolakowski is a practical hero. She knows Kenosha will benefit from an elevated performance hall, and that children in cities all over will benefit from relatable role models in the classroom,” says Carthage President John Swallow. “Grace is making both possible, and I am inspired by her vision and generosity every day.”

Kolakowski joined a Franciscan convent at age 16 and served the order as an educator for 21 years. Even after leaving religious life behind, she worked in schools for another 21 years as a teacher and principal.

Pivoting to philanthropy in retirement, Kolakowski naturally wanted to “reach and inspire children” above all. Providing the essential resources to carry out her vision, she felt comfortable entrusting the work to Carthage.

“I manage money very well,” she says, “and I thought this was a good place to put it.”

Kolakowski appreciates the college’s religious roots, as well as its focus on the arts. Years before Carthage emerged as a like-minded partner, she began advocating for a new performance space that could satisfy the Kenosha community’s appetite for music and introduce the arts to young patrons.

The Siebert Chapel project aligns with that vision. The facility already welcomes the public to more than two dozen vocal and orchestral performances each year, including the popular Carthage Christmas Festival.

Completed in 1975, the chapel is due for upgrades to the sound system, lighting, and seating areas. Adding new features, such as a mobile stage and adjustable acoustic panels, will accommodate the space's various uses.

The building is named in honor of the late Albert F. Siebert, whose philanthropic foundation recently allotted \$50,000 for the renovation project. Kolakowski hopes her gift will inspire others to contribute toward the \$6 million that's needed to complete all of the planned upgrades and support both the campus pastor position and programming in the Center for Faith and Spirituality.

The chance to provide scholarship funding for aspiring educators also appealed to Kolakowski. Although she loved working with students of color in urban classrooms, the benefit of connecting those young learners with teachers from similar backgrounds became clear to her.

Carthage offers a variety of undergraduate degree programs for prospective K-12 educators, including the most immersive Urban Teacher Preparation Program of its kind in Wisconsin. In addition, the college has a Master of Education program with several specializations.

Visit www.carthage.edu/light for more information about the "Light that Travels" campaign.



About Carthage

Carthage College is raising expectations for a private college experience. It blends the best liberal arts traditions with desirable degree programs, transformative learning opportunities, personal attention from distinguished faculty, and a focus on career development, which makes its graduates competitive in the workforce. Carthage has undertaken a \$100 million fundraising campaign, "Light that Travels," to deliver a radiant future for students through access, program innovation, and sustained excellence. Founded in 1847, Carthage is located on an idyllic shore of Lake Michigan in Kenosha, Wisconsin, in the thriving corridor between Milwaukee and Chicago. Grow with us: www.carthage.edu