

THE GOVERNOR'S ARTS AWARD

Gordon and Geri Moulton

Champion of Art Throughout the University of South Alabama, Mobile Region

Photo: Courtesy of the University of South Alabama



During their forty-six years of service to USA, Gordon and Geri Moulton have consistently made art a priority and integrated a love of art into projects at the University and across the region.

Two boys hang from monkey bars. A girl makes her first ballet step. A group of children pose for a photo, while six others play tug-of-war.

Such iconic bronze sculptures dot the scenic Geri Moulton Children's Park, offering nature and art—two ingredients for helping people heal—to those who stroll along the calming grounds from Mobile's

Springhill Avenue to the University of South Alabama Children's & Women's Hospital and the USA Mitchell Cancer Institute.

The park offers both a place of joy and celebration for those experiencing the miracle of birth, but also a place of comfort for families and health care professionals coping with the challenges of illness.

The 7-acre park, which includes

more than 50 bronze sculptures, was made possible by a wide range of supporters, including employees, friends of the University, medical professionals and the families of children cared for at the hospital.

USA's Board of Trustees named the park in honor of Geri Moulton, wife of USA President Gordon Moulton, who took up the park as a personal cause and worked tirelessly to secure the many donations of sculpture to make it possible.

That combination of devotion, leadership and advocacy on behalf of public art projects illustrates the contributions of Gordon and Geri Moulton. The park is but one example of the Moultons' transformational impact on the arts across the Mobile region. The couple has encouraged an artistic renaissance across USA's campuses as well as throughout the community. During their 46 years of service to USA, the Moultons have consistently made art a priority and integrated a love of art into projects at the University and across the region.

The Moultons are arts patrons whose ability to gather support and lead others in public arts projects has elevated the arts across the area, resulting in projects such as: the



Murals that depict teaching, research, health care and outreach were installed at the base of the Moulton Tower in 2012. Jason Guynes, USA visual arts department chairman, created the panels with the help of students. The idea for the murals, which were supported by private donors, was launched at the Moultons' dining room table.

Children's Park, the University sculpture collection, the USA Glass Art Studio and program, and the recently unveiled murals at Moulton Tower & Alumni Plaza. Each project adds to the beauty of the USA campus and medical facilities, while helping improve the environment for students, faculty, staff and patients.

Over the years, their personal philanthropy has touched numerous artistic and creative endeavors, such as Moulton Tower and Alumni Plaza, Geri Moulton Children's Park, student scholarships, faculty support, USA's creative writing program, and many others. In addition to their generous financial support of the arts, their vision of the integral role of art as a teaching and healing tool has been an essential force to inspire others to support projects for the betterment of all.

Since being named USA's leader in 1998, President Moulton has

been an advocate for integrating art, sculpture and cohesive architecture



Due to the increasing popularity of glass as a medium in visual arts, and as a way to attract more art students to the University, the Trustees passed a 2008 resolution to begin the glass program. The undergraduate program began in 2010 and now enrolls more than 75 students each semester. It has been a bridge to bring visiting artists to campus and further strengthen ties with the local arts community.



Photo: Courtesy of the University of South Alabama

The setting at Geri Moulton Children's Park, with lush green landscaping and sculptures, offers a place of joy and solace for patients, families and health care professionals. Geri and Gordon Moulton helped welcome the public to the park, which opened in 2001.

into improvements and enhancements across campus. He has advocated a cohesive architectural look for major construction projects on campus

including landmark buildings such as Shelby Hall, the Health Sciences Building and the Student Recreation Center, which are complemented by

attractive entry portals that give the University a sense of place.

"When I go into the community, people are excited about USA's physical improvements and the beautification of our campus," said USA President Gordon Moulton. "These enhancements have reflected the maturing of the institution as a desirable place to live, learn, work and play."

Through the leadership of the Moultons and gifts from private donors, sculptures have been added throughout campus, such as the minstrel piper in front of the USA Laidlaw Center for Performing Arts. When the new Student Recreation Center opened, a key feature was a bronze abstract sculpture that emphasizes teamwork as a way to overcome adversity. The new Shelby Hall, a landmark building that houses USA's



Photo: Courtesy of the University of South Alabama

Geri Moulton worked for more than a decade to secure donors and sculptures for a children's park between Spring Hill Avenue and the University of South Alabama Children's & Women's Hospital and USA Mitchell Cancer Institute. The park was later named Geri Moulton's Children's Park in her honor.

College of Engineering and School of Computing, offers a bronze sculpture of Einstein on a bench. Students can sit with the scientific genius as they take a break from their studies. And a newly installed large bronze sculpture of the University's mascot, SouthPaw, welcomes alumni and visitors from his new home in front of Alumni Hall, an 1828 historic home for which Mrs. Moulton guided the restoration.

Beyond the physical infrastructure of campus, President and Mrs. Moulton advocated for an expansion of arts education in the Visual Arts Department. Due to the increasing popularity of glass as a medium in visual arts, and as a way to attract more art students to the University, the Trustees passed a 2008 resolution to begin the glass program. The undergraduate

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While President and Mrs. Moulton were leading the charge for a more art-filled and vibrant campus, alumni and USA supporters were working to create a campus landmark. After years of planning, fundraising and hard work by countless University of South Alabama alumni and supporters, a new bell tower emerged at USA in 2010.

A 140-foot-high brick and stone bell tower houses an electronic carillon as well as four bronze bells, ranging in size from 600 pounds to more than a ton.



Photo: Courtesy of the University of South Alabama

A minstrel piper welcomes all to the USA campus and the Laidlaw Center for the Performing Arts. The sculpture, donated by a private donor, is an example of the advocacy and leadership the Moultons' have demonstrated over the years.

The complex also features seating for small and large events, as well as an amphitheater, two arbors, an alumni plaza and Walls of Honor with the names of the 1,300 donors to the project.

"At first, the dream was that of simply a large campus landmark," said Dr. Joseph F. Busta Jr., vice president for development and alumni relations, "but it evolved to be much more than a concrete and brick structure. The dream, now realized, is a special, nay, a sacred space."

Even while the tower was still under construction, USA's Board of Trustees in 2009 unanimously passed a resolution naming the tower "in appreciation and recognition of the service of President Moulton and Geri Moulton," calling it "fitting and appropriate to associate their names and legacy with the bell tower—a pre-eminent landmark structure that will be an enduring symbol of the spirit of the University of



Photo: Courtesy of the University of South Alabama

A bronze statue of Einstein beckons students to stop for a visit near the new Shelby Hall, home of the USA College of Engineering and School of Computing. Made possible by a generous donation from private donors, the sculpture illustrates the Moulton's commitment to including artistic works in all new construction projects.

South Alabama.”

Reflecting on the board’s resolution to name the Tower in his and his wife’s honor, President Moulton said, “Working with the students and faculty, and being able to see this institution evolve, have been very rewarding experiences for me. I couldn’t imagine anything better than having your colleagues say thank you in a way like this.

“It’s been a great journey, and Geri has been a part of it every step of the way,” he added. “Her help has been immeasurable.”

Mrs. Moulton said she was deeply touched by the board’s gesture.

“This is a statement about my husband’s life’s work,” she said. “The

unyielding trust and support of the board propels him to do his best. The University of South Alabama has given him an opportunity to make a living, to make a life and to make a difference. What can possibly be better than that?”

Since its dedication in 2010, the Moulton Tower and Alumni Plaza complex has become a place where artistic performances occur, students meet and groups gather, and it is now the centerpiece of major University moments, including homecoming and graduation.

At Homecoming 2012, as part of the University’s 50th Anniversary celebration, another artistic aspect of Moulton Tower was unveiled:

hand-painted, European-style murals in its vaulted masonry ceiling.

The three-year labor of love began as an idea, one first conceptualized at the Moultons’ kitchen counter. Yet again, the Moultons demonstrated leadership and advocacy of art in public spaces, this time in conversation with Jason Guynes, chairman of USA’s visual arts department.

An accomplished muralist with a national reputation for creating exquisite works of public art, Guynes was excited by the opportunity on campus. The work is a montage of people and moments—enthusiastic students, committed faculty, dedicated researchers, skilled physicians, triumphant athletes, gleeful marching band musicians and cheerleaders, and proud alumni. The colorful murals are an awe-inspiring representation of the heart, soul and mission of the University.

The murals are yet another example of how President and Mrs. Moulton, through their leadership and advocacy of the arts, have transformed both the University and the region. Their example and vision of integrating art into public spaces have shaped the feel of the University and will continue to influence both the campus community and the larger community for generations to come.

Article submitted by

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Office of Public Relations



Photo: Courtesy of the University of South Alabama

Moulton Tower and Alumni Plaza has become a campus landmark and gathering place for events. Named in honor of President Gordon Moulton and Geri Moulton, the complex was dedicated in 2010.