

The University of Texas of The Permian Basin



ENDOWMENT PROFILE

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A Bright New Star in the West Texas Sky

AFTER FOUR DECADES of dreaming and nearly three years of construction, the Wagner Noël Performing Arts Center at The University of Texas of the Permian Basin opened its doors on Nov. 1, 2011, to a sellout crowd. It was a night to remember to say the least. Grammy™ Living Legend Rod Stewart was center stage and the communities who had come together to make their grand vision a reality were in the audience.

“The Wagner Noël Performing Arts Center would have never come to fruition without the cooperation of Odessa and Midland,” says W. David Watts, president of UT Permian Basin. “The center is not only a visible symbol of culture, education and achievement, but also a testament to the power of community.”

Standing nearly ten stories high, the state-of-the-art, 108,500-square-foot facility will impact the cultural landscape of the Permian Basin for generations to come with community and regional events that range from Broadway tours to performing Symphonies to ballet, opera and musical concerts.

Two families were instrumental in bringing their communities together to see the world-class facility realized: Lissa and Cy Wagner, Jr., of Midland and Mrs. W.D. (Ellen) Noël of Odessa.

In 2007, Mrs. Noël matched a \$5 million pledge made by her daughter Lissa and son-in-law Cy. The pledges set off the largest single fundraising campaign in the history of UT Permian Basin, leading to the successful funding, construction and completion of the Wagner Noël Performing Arts Center.

Grant Billingsley, chairman of the Special Community Advisory Committee established by the UT System in 2007, says, “The Wagners — Mr. and Mrs. Wagner and Mrs. Noel — created the momentum that enabled us to forge ahead.”

“People believed it was going to happen. It wasn’t talk anymore,” says Don Wood, vice chairman of the Special Community Advisory Committee. “That’s when individuals, families, businesses — 86 founders total — joined in the effort. Most people we talked to said this is the largest commitment they’d ever made in their life.”



The Wagner Noël Performing Arts Center

By June 2008, a total of \$20 million had been pledged by generous Permian Basin donors in support of the project along with \$6.5 million committed by the UT System and an additional \$7.5 million approved by the Texas Legislature during its 80th session. At the same time, a goal was established to provide a total of \$89 million from all sources to fund construction and to fund an endowment that will provide ongoing support for the facility.

Although Ellen Noël and Cy Wagner are no longer with us, they have left a legacy of leadership and service that will forever change the West Texas landscape.

“You would not expect to find something of this size and magnitude out here,” says Grant Billingsley. “But that’s been Midland and Odessa forever. It’s evidence of the spirit of the people in the community to do things that are unexpected. Anything is possible.”

If you’d like more information about how to start an endowment, please contact:

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