



From the Russ College Board

Engineers Touching Lives, Lives Touching Engineers

Debbie Burke, B.S.Ch.E. '85, is chair of the board of visitors. A former engineering and construction manager for Columbia Gas of Ohio and Kentucky for 16 years, she also serves on the National Alumni Board. She lives in the Columbus area with her husband, Bill, D.O. '88, and their children, Lydia, 12, and Ross, 10.

Most of what engineers accomplish each day goes unnoticed by most people. We undertake many actions that can touch lives in big or small ways, in ways we might not even realize at the moment. We have both great power and great responsibility as engineers and technologists to touch lives. In turn, the people and projects we encounter have the power to touch us.

In May, mechanical engineering senior design teams demonstrated just that when presenting their projects to the Russ College Board of Visitors at our annual spring meeting. An especially memorable moment was trying out the ballpoint pen assembly jig that “Team Redundancy Team” (TRT) created for Roy, a disabled worker.

In a flash, I experienced how TRT made a simple operation more efficient, and therefore, improved not only productivity, but more importantly, the life of someone who struggles to do things I take for granted. I saw Roy through our students’ eyes and felt how he had touched their lives. Then, in another flash, this past August, one of those students was gone when Dylan Andrews passed away in an ATV accident a week short of completing his classes.

A fellow TRT team member, senior Micah McCreery, B.A. '03, noted that Dylan viewed the project’s results as an

extension and reflection of himself, saying the pen assembly jig wouldn’t have been the same without him on the team. Beyond the great work they did for Roy, Dylan and his team inspired me—and my fellow board members—that day. And Roy was just one of the people we know of whom Dylan touched.

Fritz and Dolores Russ had already touched thousands of lives as champions of engineering education before they left their humbling estate gift to the Russ College. We’ll never be able to adequately quantify the influence of their generosity—but we know it will be exponential, building student upon student, professor upon professor, year upon year for decades to come.

We thank the Russes for trusting us and enabling us to prepare future engineers and technologists that will leave the gates of Ohio University to go and touch lives across the world.

It is a privilege to serve on the Russ College Board of Visitors, and to take my new post this year as chair. I eagerly await learning more about the many ways the Russ College is improving lives for so many. 🙏

EDITOR’S NOTE: For more on the senior design projects, see page 7.