Martens Leadership Gift

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A celebration is planned tomorrow afternoon for the leadership gift Eva and Jim Martens have made benefitting the WKU Alumni Center and WKU Athletics.

In this week’s View from the Hill, Amy Bingham sits down with the Martens in the WKU room of their home to talk about what the university means to them.

“God and WKU and Bowling Green have been such a blessing to me and my wife.”

A five million dollar gift from longtime WKU supporters Eva and Jim Martens is launching a new era of the Alumni Center.

“I love Western and I love our community.”

Jim Marten’s love for Western Kentucky University can be traced back to his high school shop teacher in his hometown of Battlecreek Michigan.

“He was a WKU graduate and it was WKU this and WKU that. He was a wonderful influence on my life and he talked me into coming down for a visit.”

That spring visit, coupled with some snowy weather on the way home, sealed Jim’s fate in 1968.

“We got to the Michigan line and there’s a bridge that says welcome to Michigan. When we got to that bridge the snow started falling and that’s what flipped the switch and I went home and I told my parents I’m going to WKU.”

Jim is the first of eight family members and counting to graduate from WKU. He began his career with the highway department and soon got an opportunity in the mobile home business.

“I got into the rental business in 1974 with a 2500 dollar mobile home was my start, and that’s evolved. I bought my first shopping center in 1994 and that’s been my focus since then.”

Jim says he and Eva are truly blessed to be able to commit more than five million dollars not only to the alumni center which bears their name but also to athletics through current support and a provision in their estate plans.

“In essence we will be contributing members of the athletic foundation, the football excellence program and the basketball excellence program into perpetuity. To think about where Eva and I started and to get this honor, is just, we just have to pinch each other.”

With this week’s View from the Hill, I’m Amy Bingham.

WKU will honor Eva and Jim Martens for their transformational gift at a celebration tomorrow afternoon at 3 pm at the Eva and Jim Martens Alumni Center.

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