



John M. Gendler '70

Exceptional Service Award

John Gendler is the ultimate yes man; for 40 years, “yes” has been Gendler’s only answer when Carleton asks for a portion of his time, money, and energy.

Gendler has participated in a wide variety of Carleton events, including reunions, Twin Cities Carleton club activities, an alumni trip to Botswana, and a student/alumni panel at the Cave. In fact, he has attended more than 65 Carleton events, most in the company of his wife, Janet Hollis Gendler '70.

Gendler also said yes to several volunteer roles. He served as an Alumni Annual Fund (AAF) class agent from 1995 to 1999, coordinated the AAF phonathon from 1995 to 2000, and was an assistant class agent from 2000 to 2005. He also served on the AAF Board from 2000 to 2008, was the 1970s decade director, and was AAF board chair from 2006 to 2008, leading the College to a record alumni participation rate of 56 percent. He also agreed to serve as co-chair of his 25th, 30th and 40th reunion committees.

Beyond his own remarkable service, Gendler often coaxes a yes from his classmates, whether to donations, reunion attendance, or volunteering. “John is a bit of a stand-up comedian,

which is perfect for cajoling people to make an effort,” wrote one classmate. Said another nominator, “He continues to be an exceptional ambassador for the school in many different ways.”

Praise flows his way from staff members, fellow volunteers, and classmates alike, with all noting his unique sense of humor, personal generosity, inspirational leadership, willingness to take on tasks others sometimes shun, infectious and genuine enthusiasm, and underlying conviction about the importance of supporting Carleton and ensuring access to Carleton through support for financial aid.

A government and international relations major, Gendler earned a JD at Cornell University and was an assistant Hennepin County attorney from 1975 to 1981. He moved to private legal practice in 1981 and was a co-founder of the Minneapolis firm Smith, Gendler, Shiell, Sheff, Ford, & Maher.

Gendler and his wife, Janet Hollis Gendler '70, have two children and live in Minneapolis.