Jim Reynolds ‘67 and Nancy Reynolds ’66/’70 both have longtime relationships with Winona State University.

The connection began early for Nancy, who grew up in nearby Chatfield, Minnesota. Winona State had been part of her life since she was ten years old. She attended summer programs at the Phelps School while her mother worked on a bachelor’s degree. Her mother and brother earned two degrees at WSU, just as Nancy would go on to do.

Jim discovered Winona during his search for a college to study teacher education. The Minneapolis native was aware of Winona State’s academic reputation and he fell for the campus. It’s where he met Nancy, and it’s where he would return a few years later when asked to join the sociology faculty at his alma mater.

Jim and Nancy Reynolds took different paths in forging their ties with Winona State. But they share the notion that the university changes the lives of those it touches, and see it as their responsibility to maintain and care for its assets.
“We enjoyed an excellent education, and we can help maintain the possibility of an education for current and future students at Winona State,” says Nancy. Jim adds, “We feel that it’s our responsibility to care for something very valuable that has been entrusted to us.”

Although Nancy retired after 30 years of teaching in the Winona Area Public Schools, and Jim in 2004 as professor emeritus of sociology at WSU, both have worked tirelessly to “pay back” the university. The couple has generously funded two scholarships, reflecting their interests in education and sociology. They’ve perhaps given more, however, through the time and talent they spend advancing the mission of Winona State.

Shortly before he stopped teaching, Jim realized that the university was losing a tremendous asset in the knowledge of retiring faculty, administration and staff members. He worked with colleague Ron Stevens to found the WSU Retiree Center that, today, contributes about 1,800 hours of service annually to the university and community. “And think of the talented faculty and staff who are remaining engaged and committed, and who see helping Winona State as their responsibility, too,” says Jim.

Nancy has always felt a deep sense of place in southeastern Minnesota, and Jim developed an appreciation for the area during his undergraduate days. They’re committed to helping campus remain a creative and distinctive place to pursue education at any age, according to Nancy.

Most recently, both have been working with others on a committee to designate campus as a landscape arboretum, dedicated to public education, scientific study, and enjoyment. Examples include the recently completed, student-designed native prairie garden near the Integrated Wellness Complex, and the project to label campus trees. Students and community members can walk through campus and find information on Winona State’s trees using a smartphone app developed by WSU Information Technology. The Reynolds’ commitment to the Cal Fremling Floating Interpretive Center and Classroom boat project will enable faculty and students to extend their studies in a different direction when they begin plying the Mississippi this fall aboard the new, 49-passenger research and education vessel.

Jim and Nancy Reynolds aren’t working tirelessly to be remembered. It’s for a place they treasure. Nancy and Jim agree, “We want Winona State to be able do for others what it has done for us.”