

## MIKE GILL MAKES A PITCH FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS. AND THE FANS GO WILD.



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Mike Gill came to Clemson from Baltimore in the fall of 1968 on a baseball scholarship. Today, he and his wife, Mary, support the Brooks Center for the Performing Arts with a generous endowment. Perhaps the connection between baseball and the Brooks Center is not readily apparent, but then Clemson has a way of bringing people and ideas together in unexpected ways.

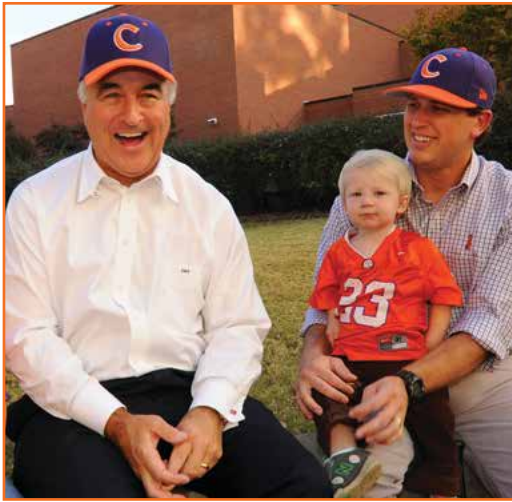
### The Donors

While playing for the Tigers, Mike got to know Byron Harder, a young doctor working at the Redfern Health Center. Byron was a fan of the baseball team and treated many of its players. But Byron was also a fan of Lillian “Mickey” Harder, now his wife and director of the Brooks Center. The friendship that was struck between the Harders and Mike remains today.

Says Mike, “Mickey Harder is Clemson University’s ‘Dabo Swinney of the Arts.’ She is all in, all the time.” Mike cites Mickey’s energy, passion, commitment and vision as essential to the arts program. And he feels the arts are essential to the University.

“You cannot be a great university without a great performing arts center,” says Mike. “It is a source of ideas, a source of stimulation, a source that will lead to creative endeavors.” He goes on to say, “It’s an environment that is engaging and celebrates diversity in all its forms – gender, race and culture. The Brooks Center offers so much to be learned by students of all disciplines.”

Now back to baseball. Mike and Mary’s second daughter, Allie, graduated from Clemson in ’03. While a student, she met Steve Pyzik, a catcher for the Tigers who played in two College World Series. (Yes, Byron Harder was still looking after the baseball players more than 30 years after Mike arrived as a freshman.) Steve graduated in ’04 and went on to play in the Atlanta Braves organization for four years, and then he and Allie were married. The Gills’ son, Mike Jr., also graduated from Clemson in ’07.



## The Gift

Through his children, Mike Gill reconnected with the University, serving on the President's Advisory Board and on the Steering Committee for the Will to Lead campaign. He also joined the Advisory Board of the Spiro Institute.

"Once you've experienced Clemson, you're hooked for life," says Mike. He describes the Gills' endowment as a "serendipitous thing," resulting from his friendship with the Harders, his children's Clemson education and his experience serving on the Board of Regents for the University System of Maryland, where he became aware of the importance of an outstanding performing arts center within a university.

Mike founded AMERICOM, a cellular business that quickly became one of the leading technical services companies in the wireless industry, and he served as chairman of Evergreen Advisors LLC, an investment bank providing capital and advisory services to emerging and middle market companies. His list of board and committee service is long and impressive – so impressive that in 2014 Maryland Governor Larry Hogan named Mike secretary of the state's Department of Business and Economic Development.

Mike and Mary come back to campus often. They've had the thrill of watching their grandchildren run the bases at Doug Kingsmore Stadium and the pleasure of watching the Brooks Center grow and thrive through their generous support.

## The Impact

Jordan Taylor, a Clemson student and performing arts major, was the first recipient of the Gill Endowment. The scholarship allowed him to pursue his dream of becoming a choral conductor at the collegiate level.

A talented singer and drummer, Jordan recalls the nerves he felt at his performing arts audition and the excitement of receiving his acceptance letter. "After seeing the Brooks Center and meeting the most welcoming people I was sold," he says.

But when his sophomore year came around Jordan's family wasn't sure they could afford another semester of out-of-state tuition. The Maryland native prepared to transfer to a local community college.

Just in time, Jordan learned he had been selected to receive a scholarship from the Gill Endowment. "I was so honored that they chose me," he says. "When I discovered the Gills are also from Maryland, it felt even more personal. It's like a gift from neighbors I've never met."

From touring Italy with the CU Singers to running down the hill with the Tiger Band to playing in the Pep Band at basketball games, Jordan has made unforgettable memories during his time at Clemson.

"Music is my passion, but not my only focus," says Jordan. "Here I have diverse friendships, a job and the opportunity to play intramural and club sports. And still participate in seven performing arts ensembles!"

Thanks to the Gills, Jordan looks forward to putting his degree to work. "Because of their generosity, I hope to someday inspire performing arts students the same way my professors inspire me."