



# So Near, So Dear

**So** Near, So Dear — four words of a beloved Sigma Alpha Iota song by Glad Robinson Youse that invoke feelings of sisterhood, a shared love of music, and a lifelong commitment to the Fraternity. This was the theme of the SAI National Convention held in Scottsdale, Arizona, last summer. There we celebrated these words and continue to do so as we honor 116 years of the Fraternity! As members, we have our own personal experience of how Sigma Alpha Iota has touched our lives and enhanced our story. We are honored to have two past scholarship and award recipients share, in their own words, what impact the Fraternity and SAI Philanthropies, Inc. have made, and continue to make, on their lives. We ask that you share in the creation of similar stories by donating to SAI Philanthropies, Inc., helping others with the priceless gift that SAI brings you.

— *Chairman Heidi Frankson,  
SAI Philanthropies, Inc.*

*How can you make a difference? Send your gift to SAI Philanthropies, a 501(c)3 charitable organization.  
Donations may also be made on our secure website at [sai-national.org/donate](http://sai-national.org/donate).*



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Enclosed is my gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (checks payable to SAI Philanthropies, Inc.)

***Yes! I want to be listed in the SAI Symphony Society!***

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- Please do not send me a thank-you gift.
- Please send me the Letter of Intent, with which I may announce my estate plans. I wish to support SAI Philanthropies, Inc. with planned giving.

**MAIL TO:** National Headquarters,  
One Tunnel Road, Asheville, NC 28805-1229  
[nh@sai-national.org](mailto:nh@sai-national.org)



**Leslie Odom Miller as the 1979 Aspen Summer Music Scholarship Winner and 2012 as SAI National President.**

*You won't know unless you try!*" was a standing joke between my parents and me for many years. During my undergraduate studies, I accompanied a friend to the administration building where she was applying for an academic scholarship. Since I was there, I figured "you won't know unless you try," so I went ahead and submitted the application for a scholarship. Imagine my surprise when the following summer I was awarded an academic scholarship to help pay for my tuition. *You won't know unless you try!*

While working on my doctorate, I entered the SAI Graduate Performance Awards Competition. I sent in the application and recording and didn't give it another thought. Sometime later, the

SAI Director Helen May called to tell me that I was a finalist in the Competition and that I would need to attend the SAI Convention being held in Phoenix that summer. *You won't know unless you try!*

Because of the support SAI Philanthropies gave me, as a recipient of a summer scholarship to Tanglewood and as a finalist in the Graduate Performance Awards Competition, my musical experiences were expanded beyond what they could have been if I hadn't tried. I still vividly remember performing in front of the convention body. All the music had to be memorized and I still can play most of those pieces without

much review. My confidence in my playing and stage presence grew by leaps and bounds with that performance as I was playing for such a supportive audience of my sisters. Imagine having National President at that time – Pat Stenberg – being one of the judges!

One never knows what legacy one will leave behind. During her lifetime, my mother, a devoted SAI patroness, and I made a "habit" of donating to SAI Philanthropies to give back to our Fraternity for helping to further my career. We also wanted to provide opportunities for others to experience the greatness of music through the support of a scholarship or grant. SAI has always been at the forefront of my life and now it is my turn to give back to the Fraternity and to my sisters, financially as well as in the various leadership roles I have held. I continue to give to SAI so that I can make a difference in other members' lives. *So remember, you won't know unless you try!*



**S**AI's centennial celebration in Dearborn, Michigan in 2003 was my first experience with SAI at the national level. Singing the SAI Chorale with more than 700 other sisters of all ages, learning about the work of SAI Philanthropies, Inc., and celebrating the lives of our founders was a most memorable experience. That fall I was also awarded an SAI Undergraduate Scholarship for non-music majors and my collegiate chapter was awarded a Chapter Seed Grant. As a young SAI member, I never imagined such exciting opportunities. With the help of SAI Philanthropies, Inc., many SAIs around the country and I have been able to continue our studies, create new projects that impact the music communities around us, and much more.

As an alumnae member, I continued my support of SAI Philanthropies so that other SAIs could experience the benefits of SAI Philanthropies too! Since becoming a member of the National Executive Board and the Board of SAI Philanthropies, Inc., I have had the opportunity to work on an even larger scale to continue expanding the work of SAI. This past year we premiered our SAI Convention Grants – which gave even more members, both collegiate and alumnae, the ability to share experiences at the national level, then bring these experiences and ideas home to their local chapters and communities.



**Jennifer Zerangue Mistretta, with Daryle Gardner-Bonneau, as a 2003 Undergraduate Scholarship Winner, in 2009 as National Vice President, Finance, and now as NVP Extension.**

**As we work to carry out SAI's vision, I encourage each of you to think back on your own journey in SAI. Consider giving to the SAI Symphony Society so that other members can enhance their own "SAI journey" too!**