

Sokolovs Fund Support for Penn State's Child Study Center

Rick Sokolov '71 psychology has long focused on Penn State. As a kid growing up in Philadelphia, it was assumed he would attend Penn State. He did, and met his wife, **Susan Saltzman Sokolov '71 EDU**, here. Now, thirty-one years after he graduated (Phi Beta Kappa, no less), his focus is still on Penn State. His daughter, Lisa, will graduate Penn State in June of 2003. His twin daughters, Anne and Kate, will be high school seniors and are interested in Penn State as well.

But Rick's interests in Penn State have also gone beyond the familial. His achievements both professionally and in philanthropy earned him a 2000 Alumni Fellow Award from Penn State. He has enjoyed a very successful career with the Simon DeBartolo Group, as president and chief operating officer. The group oversees the development and operation of nearly two hundred shopping malls (including Minneapolis' Mall of America and Forum Shops in Las Vegas) as well as some office and mixed-use properties. He has been active in his community in Youngstown, Ohio, with the United Way as well as with other organizations. Rick had also served as chairman of the International Council of Shopping Centers, the association for the shopping center industry with almost 40,000 members.

The Sokolovs have directed much of their giving to the University, establishing two funds in athletics and giving to funds in Jewish Studies, the Hillel Foundation, and general funds in Liberal Arts and athletics. But a recent gift, the Richard and Susan Sokolov Family Fund in the Child Study Center, is the couple's first major gift to the College of the Liberal Arts, and one which will be of great service not only to the researchers in the Department of Psychology, but to the people they help.



Operated in the Department of Psychology, the Child Study Center (CSC) is dedicated to promoting children's development through gaining knowledge about children's

typical and atypical development. For instance, the CSC has researchers considering a range of topics, including how infants develop the ability to understand the space around them, hormonal reasons for why boys and girls behave differently, as well as how young children and teens alike learn to process and regulate emotions. Then, CSC faculty and staff work with schools, families, and counselors to apply that knowledge in their own educational, prevention, and intervention programs.

The CSC's outreach activities are manifold and cover everything from one-on-one therapy for adolescents, to work with juvenile justice agencies to evaluate and treat young offenders and victims, to multi-site programs to help young, at-risk children in several school districts develop conflict resolution strategies. They even offer free eye-testing for infants because the information they gain helps researchers to better understand the earliest developments in human sight. Finally, the CSC trains undergraduate and graduate students, service providers, and the public with an integrated program involving developmental science, education, and community service initiatives. Thus, the CSC extends the reach and impact of its expertise on all aspects of child and family development to the many arenas in

which such knowledge is critical.

The result is that the CSC helps both children in need as well as children who, by developmental standards, do not have any special needs. The work of CSC researchers and clinicians provides doctors, teachers, counselors, and parents with ever more understanding about how children grow and develop. Because it also allows faculty to train graduate students in a real-world, hands-on environment, while giving undergraduate students exposure to cutting-edge research in the field, the CSC is very unusual.

This model works because at the foundation of the CSC is the belief that finding ways to help children and adolescents is best achieved by an integrated approach. Clinical psychologists work side by side with developmental specialists, and researchers working in language development might suggest approaches to social psychologists. What matters is that the faculty and students at the CSC are in sustained regular contact with other researchers, other perspectives, and with the people in need of their services.

The Sokolovs' gift is devoted to program support, and will therefore be a source of funds for the director to use in addressing priorities from year to year. It may help launch a particular study by a faculty member, or it may support a developing clinical service. In the end, however, by supporting the CSC, the gift will help the children and families who benefit from advances made there.

That the gift would help was Rick Sokolov's main concern. "I wanted to know where the greatest needs were in the College, and so I asked the Dean," he says. "She indicated the Child Study Center needed such funds to help them in their good work, and we were glad to help out."