

## Lehigh News



Mark Wilson, executive director of the Zoellner Arts Center, spoke during this year's annual Tower Society meeting about the importance of the arts and the connection between Lehigh's Zoellner Arts Center and the surrounding community.

## **Tower Society Annual Meeting: Celebrating the Arts, Zoellner's 25th Anniversary**

Annual Tower Society Meeting recognizes Zoellner Arts Center's 25th anniversary, which began Oct. 1 with a performance by the New York Philharmonic.

Celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Zoellner Arts Center was the focus of this year's annual Tower Society meeting, held Oct. 1 in Lehigh's Wood Dining Room in Iacocca Hall. Although the remnants of Hurricane Ian made for cold and rainy weather, members could feel the warmth and excitement of being gathered together once again.

Lorraine Wiedorn, assistant vice president for planned giving, welcomed guests and introduced the meeting's topic, Zoellner Arts Center, as "the crown jewel for the visual and performing arts on campus."

Michael Caruso '67, chair of the Tower Society, thanked members for all they have done to open doors and increase opportunities for students at Lehigh. He highlighted that evening's performance of the New York

Philharmonic in Zoellner, underwritten by and in celebration of Tower society member Ron Ulrich, as an example of the impact members have made.

“So many of our distinguished Tower Society families have been involved with Zoellner from its inception, and we thank you for your generous support to bring the performing and visual arts to our university,” said Caruso.

President Joseph Helble '82 also welcomed guests and took the opportunity to speak about the launch of the Lehigh strategic planning process, the first in 13 years.

"This strategic planning effort will help shape our course over the next decade, identifying areas critical to our research and educational mission where Lehigh can innovate and be a leader, building on our unique strengths," Helble said.

Then, [Zoellner Arts Center was in the spotlight](#). Keynote speaker and Zoellner Arts Center Executive Director Mark Wilson spoke about the importance the arts have on the community, explaining the connection that Zoellner creates between Lehigh and the surrounding community.

“Earlier this week, 700 area schoolchildren came to Zoellner and were able to listen to the Lehigh University Philharmonic do a workshop with the New York Philharmonic. The kids were leaning forward in awe, watching those members working with our orchestra,” Wilson said. “So, we’re bringing the community and our students together – and that’s what I was imagining when I took this job two years ago.”

Wilson described his vision for the future of the arts at Lehigh: “Folks in the community walking into Zoellner, going into the Black Box Theatre, working with theater students, engineering students, co-creating a theatrical piece together ... everyone working together through the arts,” Wilson said. “When you have all those things happening, the arts really become embedded into our campus, into our community. We bring people together and that makes a healthy community.”

Wilson thanked the Tower Society for all they have done to help the arts make an impact at Lehigh in the past 25 years, and said he was “looking forward to what they can do in the next 25 years.”

At the close of the meeting, Tower Society member Oldrich “Ollie” Foucek III '72 was presented with the James Ward Packard Award, which recognizes an individual or family who champions the educational mission of Lehigh University, and acknowledges meritorious volunteer work done for the planned giving program. Foucek, a longtime benefactor of the arts, has been leading the Zoellner Advisory Council for nearly 25 years, and is a current member of the Lehigh University Art Galleries Advisory Council.

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