

# Donor Spotlight:

# Tanuja Sheth

*Tanuja and her husband, Ketan are donors of the Butler Center, specifically through their Ketan and Tanuja Sheth Family Endowment, which has funded seven Butler Center Research Project Grants since 2019.*

## WHAT LED YOU TO GIVE TO THE BUTLER CENTER?

Ultimately, it was the mission of the Butler Center that inspired us. The YWCA and Butler Center align in that we both support and uplift women; the YWCA focuses on supporting the women of greater Lafayette and the Butler Center specifically supports Purdue women faculty, staff, and graduate students. I was also encouraged by the robust mentorship programs that the Butler Center offers with a team of mentors who truly care and check up on their mentees. Even though we support different groups of women in town, I see our missions as interconnected and mutually impactful in that there are benefits that trickle down from the university to the community and vice versa.

As my daughters grew up, I started thinking about what kind of support system I wanted for them. The support system that I've had professionally means so much to me - it's something I've relied on and hope my children will have as they go through their academic and professional careers. These institutions like the Butler Center are transformative for generational support - if Grandma is supported, then Mom is supported, and daughters are supported.

During my PhD at Purdue, I had an incredible male mentor, Dr. Richard Feinberg, in Consumer Behavior and Retailing. He supported me through personal hurdles in a way that didn't limit my education. When I had my third baby, he allowed me to slow down when I needed to and then later ramp it up when I was ready. His wife had gone through immense challenges, so he had seen the hurdles firsthand and learned how to support women, as well as working mothers balancing multiple roles. It's not exclusive that it has to be women supporting women - institutions like the Butler Center can also teach individuals learning to support women.

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR YOU TO SUPPORT THE YOUNG GENERATION OF WOMEN LEADERS?

Now I can see that I have a next generation - I just recently became a grandmother, so now I have not just my daughters, but a granddaughter who is probably going to push things forward in a different way. My aunt sent me a note this morning that it would have been my grandmother's 110th birthday today. I can only imagine what it will be like in another 110 years from my granddaughter's perspective.



**Tanuja Ranade Sheth** has a PhD in Consumer Behavior from Purdue University. She has worked in academics, the healthcare industry, and numerous non-profits. Her outside interests include travel and photography. She has served on many boards including the Indian Women's Association where she also served as Co-President and has served two terms on the West Lafayette Board of Public Works and Safety. She has written articles for the League of Women Voter's newsletter and has sponsored scholarships at both Purdue University and the University of Wisconsin-Madison. A deep understanding of the local community, a love of enhancing public good, and an inherent understanding of the importance of supporting women in all endeavors are the values that she brings to the position of Director of Development at the YWCA Greater Lafayette.



# Donor Spotlight: Tanuja Sheth

## WHAT IS LEADERSHIP TO YOU?

To me, leadership is a clear vision that you are able to communicate to others.

## HOW DOES YOUR JOURNEY INFORM HOW YOU RAISED YOUR DAUGHTERS? WHAT INSPIRES YOU ABOUT YOUR DAUGHTERS?

I encouraged my daughters to pursue education and choose their subject area and passion, much in the same way I was raised. What I admire most about my daughters is that they don't feel any sort of societal pressure to do anything they don't want to do. They know they have to do what is right for themselves and there is no judgment of another sister's path, no matter the role(s) they've chosen.

## WHAT IS MOST MEANINGFUL ABOUT YOUR CURRENT ROLE AS DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT AT THE YWCA GREATER LAFAYETTE? WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU ABOUT THIS POSITION?

I have worked for a retailer, in corporations, and in education and I like to see money being put to good use. Some people think there is a division between philanthropy and business enterprise, but I don't think there is. That's where I find my position as Director of Development exciting. All the nonprofits that we have in town are meant to be supportive of society and do good. If you don't have these things in society, it's a very flat society. Non-profit engagement brings livelihood and does a lot of good for local communities. I'm also passionate about uplifting women and share this mission with the Butler Center.

## WHAT IS IMPORTANT ABOUT PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN UNIVERSITIES AND THE LARGER LOCAL COMMUNITY?

It's important to bridge the gap between town and gown. There are a lot of professional women doing outstanding things across the river, but because they don't have a Purdue connection, they may never meet Purdue women and vice versa.

Salute to Women, an award we have given each year since 1974, is a premier award for women who volunteer in the community. It has been awarded to the movers and shakers of this town. Leah Jamieson, Ransburg Distinguished Professor of Purdue University Elmore Family School of Electrical and Computer Engineering and John A. Edwardson Dean Emerita of Engineering, was a former winner. There are many ways to volunteer - for Purdue women in particular, the amount of mentoring they do is significant. That is a volunteer effort and as women we do so much non-paid work. If we're doing it, we should have an outlet where we're being recognized and celebrated for this work. If you're at this pinnacle of volunteerism, you deserve recognition for that.

At the YWCA, we support a core group of women who don't have resources, so one of our missions is to make sure the women with the highest need are receiving care. The way in which we're similar to the Butler Center is in supporting women and making sure women progress, whatever obstacles we're facing. Whether it's getting a degree, or getting away from an abuser, we want to ensure there is someone there to support women in overcoming obstacles.