

The **Torchlighter Award** honors individuals who have made significant, longstanding contributions and commitments to Park University, whether alumni, faculty or friends. Recipients of this award who are not graduates are bestowed the honor of honorary alumnus.

“Giving back is just as important as succeeding. Always be generous — in business and in life. Then you will find fulfillment.”

BENNY LEE

As a serial entrepreneur, Benny Lee is known for lighting up the world. Park University has been fortunate to bask in the glow of his enthusiastic support for more than a decade.

“Park is special to me for many reasons, from its service to the military to how it warmly welcomes international students,” Lee said. “As a music lover, I’m happy to see the growing worldwide recognition for Park’s International Center for Music.”

HOME-COOKED WELCOME

The success of Park’s ICM is due in no small part to Lee’s dedication and financial support. Since its inception in 2003, Benny and his wife, Edith, have welcomed ICM faculty and students into their home — for concerts, holidays and home-cooked meals.

“Many ICM musicians come to Park from around the globe,” Lee said. “We’re glad to help them feel welcomed at Park while they improve their talents for the world to enjoy.” And the world is definitely watching: Lee said he’s especially proud of ICM graduate student Kenny Broberg, who this summer was selected as the silver medalist at the 15th Van Cliburn International Piano Competition.



Benny and Edith Lee

There’s hardly a facet of Park’s success that Lee has not influenced. Currently, Lee serves on Park’s ICM Advisory Council and he served three terms on Park’s Board of Trustees from 2003 to 2012. This spring, Lee was honorary chair for Park’s annual Night at the Helm fundraiser, with this year’s event proceeds benefiting the ICM and Park’s Global Warrior Center.



“Named 2014 Philanthropist of the Year by Nonprofit Connect, a Kansas City organization.”

CULTURAL AMBASSADOR

As an ambassador for cultural exchange, Lee has helped strengthen Park’s partnership with the Asian American Chamber of Commerce of Kansas City, where he served two terms as president.

Born in Taiwan, Lee earned a bachelor’s degree in electrical engineering from Taiwan’s Tatung Institute of Technology. In 1979, he founded Mitco, a Taipei-based trading company that sourced products such as the popular Ginsu knife and Handy Stitch sewing machine.

With his wife and three daughters, Lee moved to the U.S. in 1995 when he founded Top Innovations, a marketer of SteamFast steamers. In 2008, he sold the business, and as a major stockholder in DuraComm Corp., became its sole owner.

KEEP LEARNING ALL YOUR LIFE

Lee often shares his wisdom with Park students and alumni. “You will never know everything, so don’t be afraid of what you don’t know. Keep asking questions and learning all of your life,” said Lee, who in 2013, decided to learn how to play the clarinet. After only 10 days of lessons, he played at a reception for an ambassador from the Czech Republic.

Affirming his belief that the U.S. is the most philanthropic country in the world, Lee lives the practice of giving back. Lee and his family have eagerly embraced U.S. citizenship and have demonstrated extraordinary generosity. In 2014, he was named Philanthropist of the Year by Nonprofit Connect, a Kansas City regional association that serves individuals involved in the management of nonprofit organizations.

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