

# Stetson University receives \$1 million for art center to house Bluemner collection

By Cindi Brownfield

**S**tetson University's extensive art collection by Modernist painter Oscar Bluemner (1867-1938) soon will have a permanent gallery on campus – thanks to the generosity of longtime trustee and alumna Dolly Hand '49 and her husband, Homer Hand.

The Hands are donating a \$1 million lead gift for an art center to be built between Sampson Hall and the duPont-Ball Library. The university is applying for grants to raise additional funding needed for construction of the new facility. Construction is expected to begin this fall and take about a year to complete.

The 5,000-square-foot Homer and Dolly Hand Art Center will include two galleries – one to exhibit rotating selections from Stetson's Bluemner collection and the second to display other works from the university's permanent art collection or for special shows. The building will have a vault, a preparation area and an art study seminar room that also can be used as a reception area.

Stetson's Bluemner collection, which contains more than 1,000 pieces, was bequeathed to Stetson in 1997 by the artist's daughter, Vera Bluemner Kouba. Selections of the Vera Bluemner Kouba Collection have been exhibited at the university and at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City, but there has been no facility to make the collection accessible to students and the public on a continuing basis.

"This will allow us to preserve, protect and promote the collection," said Professor Roberta Favis, chair of the Art Department and curator of the Vera Bluemner Kouba Collection. "This is a jewel in our crown. We have been entrusted with these works of art, and this project shows we will take care of the collection into the future – for students and for art lovers and scholars."

Dolly Hand is a 1949 graduate of Stetson's College of Law, which was located on the DeLand campus until the mid-1950s. She was the only woman in her class and, at age 20, was the youngest student ever to complete the law program.

"I was much, much younger than any of the other students," she said. "Most of them were returning veterans

**Dolly '49 and Homer Hand hope the art center will be a way for people to learn more about Stetson.**



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– Dolly Hand '49

(of World War II). But everyone was very kind to me.”

Dolly Hand has served on the Stetson University Board of Trustees since 1994. The couple provided permanent funding for the Homer and Dolly Hand Award for Excellence in Faculty Research, which is given annually to recognize Stetson faculty members involved in significant research. They also give for student scholarships each year.

The Hands live in Belle Glade, where they own and operate Hand Enterprises, the management company for their land holdings. They are active in civic affairs in the Belle Glade/Okeechobee area, and both are former members of the Palm Beach Community College Board of Trustees. They have received numerous awards, including the Champion of Higher Independent Education in Florida (CHIEF) Award from the Independent Colleges and Universities of Florida in 1996.

The couple do not consider themselves serious art patrons, she said, but they were touched by Oscar Bluemner’s daughter’s gift to Stetson. They hope the Homer and Dolly Hand Art Center will increase recognition for both Bluemner’s talents and the excellence of Stetson’s Art Department.

“This is a tribute to Oscar Bluemner and a way to help Stetson,” she said. “Stetson is so rich with opportunities. We have an unbelievable School of Music, School of Business Administration and College of Arts & Sciences, and I don’t think enough people know about us. This will provide another opportunity for people to learn more about Stetson, its programs and its history.”

Photo by Cindi Brownfield



Art Department Chair Roberta Favis holds the Bluemner painting “Winter Night” in the art storage room in Sampson Hall.