Catawba Ecological Preserve Named for Fred Stanback in Surprise Ceremony

Catawba College's 189-acre environmental preserve was named for environmental champion Fred Stanback on November 8 in a special surprise ceremony honoring the longtime benefactor and advocate of the Center for the Environment.

Dr. John Wear, the Center's executive director, recognized the Stanback family – Fred and his wife, Alice, and his late mother, Elizabeth, who was the principal benefactor in the construction of the facility that houses the Center for the Environment – at the event, which was held at the entrance to what is now the “Fred Stanback, Jr. Ecological Preserve.”

Catawba College President Brien Lewis and Catawba Trustee Chair Darlene Ball unveiled the new sign, which also includes a reference to the Elizabeth Stanback Gardens.

“Fred – and indeed the Stanback family – are remarkable role models for their persistence and vision on environmental matters,” Lewis said. “The Center and the preserve are outstanding teaching tools to help all of us learn how to be good stewards of our community and our vital natural resources.”

Ball noted that Fred’s mother’s gift for the Center facility and “the many scholarships and other investments that you have provided help bring students to Catawba who are interested in and excited about becoming better stewards of our surprisingly fragile world. I cannot think of anything that is more important to the future of our universe,” she said.

“It takes a community to create what we have developed here with our Center and our ecological preserve,” Wear said. “It takes people with a variety of skills, abilities and interests, each coming to the table to offer what they can provide personally.”

He recognized three people who originally envisioned turning the farmland into a preserve: Bill and Fred Stanback and Dr. Mike Baranski, Catawba biology professor, now professor emeritus, who was instrumental in the preserve’s creation. He also recognized Windsor and James Eagle and Tim Smith and Flora Development, who donated land; the city of Salisbury; preserve keepers Bret Estep, Mark Martin, Jim Ijames, Kurt Cribb and Matt Hendricks; and work-study students who have helped maintain the property.

“But one person stands above all the others,” Wear said. “That is Fred Stanback. Fred has for many years supported campus efforts to educate our students to be better stewards of our environment while demonstrating his own personal commitment to doing so himself – in thought, word and deed.”

Noting that Stanback has always taken “the long view,” Wear said he has shared his vision and wise counsel, connecting the Center with nationally and internationally known thought leaders and encouraging the Center staff to advance a sustainable future.