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Office of University
Communications

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Stan Law '85 Strives to Help People of all Ages and Abilities

A 1985 alumnus of Gardner-Webb University has devoted his career to serving others through the YMCA. Since

Stan Law '85

1990, Stan Law has worked in various roles with the Y accepting jobs with increasing responsibilities. Now, he is president and chief executive officer of the YMCA of Northwest North Carolina in Winston-Salem. The third largest Y in the state with a \$35 million dollar budget, the association has 16 branches and provides programs for more than 150,000 adults and children. Law is the first African American to hold this position in the organization's 128-year history.

Law started his Y career in his hometown of Charlotte, N.C., and has been in Washington, D.C., Cincinnati, Ohio, and Birmingham, Ala. The Y's mission aligned perfectly with his own desire to help people, a passion he embraced as a fifth-grader when he noticed other kids in his class picking on a twin brother and sister who wore the same clothes every day.

Bothered by what he observed, Law asked his parents why the twins didn't have more clothes. His father showed him some of the run-down houses near their neighborhood and explained that sometimes, because of choices or circumstances, people don't have enough money to pay the bills and buy clothes. "We came back home and my dad asked me if I had any more questions," Law recalled. "I said, 'Dad when I grow up, I want to help people like that.' I never considered doing anything else but helping people."

He majored in social science and played tennis at Gardner-Webb. He liked the size of the University and the campus atmosphere felt right. "I needed an environment where there were not too many distractions," Law said. "At GWU, I could balance playing tennis with my studies. The sociology, psychology and history classes were critical to my career, because working in communities I have learned that if you don't understand the history of the community, you can't understand the people."

Law believes the classes in Gardner-Webb's liberal arts core curriculum prepared him for the various responsibilities in his daily schedule. "The diversity of skills that a liberal arts college teaches you has certainly helped me lead the YMCA," Law assessed. "I average seven to eight meetings a day. One meeting, I could be helping to design a building; the next minute, I could be in a conversation trying to help counsel a kid. The next, I could be

trying to set up a partnership with another organization.”

The math and economics courses he took also provided him a foundation to expand his management skills. “I have been blessed to have all these opportunities with the Y, and I learned early on that in a leadership position you don’t have to know everything, you have to know a little bit about everything,” Law reflected. “You have to lean on those who are specialists in a particular area.”



Stan Law recognizes an Y employee for completing a leadership class.

What’s more, Law’s position requires him to be a skilled communicator, despite identifying as an introvert. He connects with people using a method demonstrated by Dr. Tony Eastman, GWU professor emeritus of history. “Dr. Eastman was absolutely amazing,” Law affirmed. “He was a storyteller. I had him for several 8 a.m. classes that were an hour and 15 minutes. You were on the edge of your seat the entire time. He told stories and never opened a textbook. I learned that I liked history, and as a natural extreme introvert, my communication style is telling stories. They are my stories, and I am comfortable speaking about them in public. I have made a lot of presentations in my career, and those that go best are the ones about my experiences versus just stating a bunch of facts.”