



Gary and Dr. Marelle Yongue Schoelerman are the recipients of the 2023 Leaders in Philanthropy for St. Martin Parish.

Marelle was born and raised in Breaux Bridge and married Gary, a native of Iowa turned resident of California. The couple made their life together in St. Martin Parish and have established a strong presence in philanthropy, supporting a wide range of causes and organizations throughout their community and beyond.

The couple's dedication to giving back is rooted in values instilled by their parents. Gary discovered his father's extensive involvement in the community after his retirement, and his generosity towards his church and community left a lasting impression on him. Marelle's parents, Dr. Earnest and Virginia Yongue were inspiring role models, actively participating in numerous organizations and dedicating countless hours to helping others. Their parents' philanthropy legacy has inspired Marelle and Gary to continue their tradition of giving and making a meaningful impact in their community.

Dr. Marelle began her healthcare career as a Registered Nurse. With a passion for providing comprehensive care, she eventually transitioned into the field of Family Medicine and recently retired as a highly respected Family Physician.

Gary's life took an unexpected turn when he was drafted into the Army. After a distinguished career as an Army helicopter pilot serving in Vietnam, he was hired as a Sky Marshall and an agent of the U.S. Customs Air Branch in New Orleans, where he chased smugglers throughout the United States.

In his post-military life, Gary continued to seek opportunities to serve others. Whether it was through community initiatives, volunteering, or supporting veterans' organizations, he remained committed to making a positive impact. Gary's unwavering dedication and selflessness inspire those around him, and his story highlights the remarkable contributions and sacrifices made by individuals in service to their country.

Their support for St. Bernard Catholic Church and St. Bernard School in Breaux Bridge showcases their commitment to their faith community. Marelle and Gary actively contribute to various Bishop's projects, Mathew Kelly Ambassadors, and religious initiatives within St. Martin Parish, exemplifying their desire to nurture spiritual growth and support religious endeavors.

Recognizing the importance of learning from history, the couple extends their philanthropy to military museums and organizations. They contribute to the National World War II Museum in New Orleans, the National Vietnam War Museum in Weatherford, TX, the Vietnam Memorial Fund, and the U.S. Army Aviation Museum at Ft. Rucker, AL. Additionally, they support several Veterans Service Organizations, including the Blinded Veterans Association (BVA), American Legion Post 289 in Parks, LA, and the Vietnam Veterans of America Post in Lafayette, LA. Through these contributions, Marelle and Gary honor the sacrifices made by veterans and ensure that their stories are preserved for future generations.

Marelle also devotes her time and financial resources to her favorite organizations and women's groups, emphasizing her commitment to empowering and supporting women. Her tireless dedication to philanthropy is a testament to her compassionate nature and strong belief in making a positive difference in the lives of others.

Though they humbly acknowledge that their efforts may pale in comparison to those who came before them, Marelle and Gary's philanthropic endeavors are driven by a genuine desire to make a difference. Their support spans religious, military, community, and women's causes, showcasing their unwavering commitment to improving the lives of others and leaving a positive legacy in their wake.