

Philanthropy Profile

Protecting North Carolina's Health by Investing in a Healthy Environment

Fred and Alice Stanback of Salisbury are among the most widely respected environmental philanthropists in North Carolina. From protecting vistas along the Blue Ridge Parkway to establishing the North Carolina Coastal Federation's education center, the Stanbacks' love of nature and belief that human health is dependent on a healthy environment have resulted in organizations and institutions across the state working to protect our air, water, forests, fields, and wildlife.

The Stanbacks have funded numerous environmental educational programs and health research projects at their alma mater, Duke University. They have also supported research at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and solar energy installations at Catawba College and Rowan-Cabarrus Community College.

In 1995, the Stanbacks established an internship program at Duke University's Nicholas School of the Environment. The internship enables students to work full-time with non-profit conservation organizations. Hundreds of students have been recipients of this paid internship and organizations have benefited from these outstanding interns.

With their strong interest in the connection between health and the environment, the Stanbacks have funded studies that bring together interdisciplinary researchers from environmental and health fields. Their support of a partnership between the Duke University Nicholas School of the Environment and Duke University Cancer Center spurred collaborative research investigating links between environmental toxins and cancer. Their support continues to advance research on the environment and non-cancer health effects from toxins through the establishment of the Environmental Health Scholars Program at Duke University [1]. This program supports investigators and students in the Medical School, School of the Environment, and Law School whose work focuses on environ-

mental factors and the associated disease risk or prevalence in North Carolina.

The work of these unique research collaborations has been published in leading scientific journals. In 2014, the *International Journal of COPD* published "Long-term dynamics of death rates of emphysema, asthma, and pneumonia and improving air quality," where researchers analyzed the link between asthma, emphysema, and pneumonia mortality rates in North Carolina and changes in air pollutant levels [1]. They found significant associations between decreasing death rates and reductions of ambient air pollution.

In 2013, a gift from the Stanbacks enabled Clean Air Carolina's Charlotte Medical Advisory Team to expand and educate health professionals statewide about air quality and its health effects. The program, now called Medical Advocates for Healthy Air, has established an office in the Triangle and partnered with hospitals and institutions on educational and advocacy initiatives across the state.

The Stanbacks do more than donate funds. They have served on the boards of the Duke University Nicholas School of the Environment, Duke University Marine Lab, Duke University Cancer Center, North Carolina Nature Conservancy, Southern Environmental Law Center, Land Trust for Central North Carolina, and Catawba College. They also encourage non-research collaborations. In 2014, the Stanbacks connected the authors to one another, resulting in the annual NC BREATHE Conference which shares the latest research

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related to the impacts of air pollution on human health, the environment, and the economy, and discusses the critical role of policymaking.

In 2008, the Stanbacks were recognized for their efforts with the prestigious North Carolina Award for Public Service. "This is a richly deserved honor for Fred and Alice, whose lifelong commitment to environmental education and stewardship has made our state a better place to live," said Bill Chamedies, former Dean of the Nicholas School, about the award [2]. **NCMJ**

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