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MERCER  
ISLAND

# LIVING

A Social Publication for the Residents of Mercer Island



getting to know  
**THE PIETILAS**

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## giving back

By Breck Longstreth

# Lola Deane,

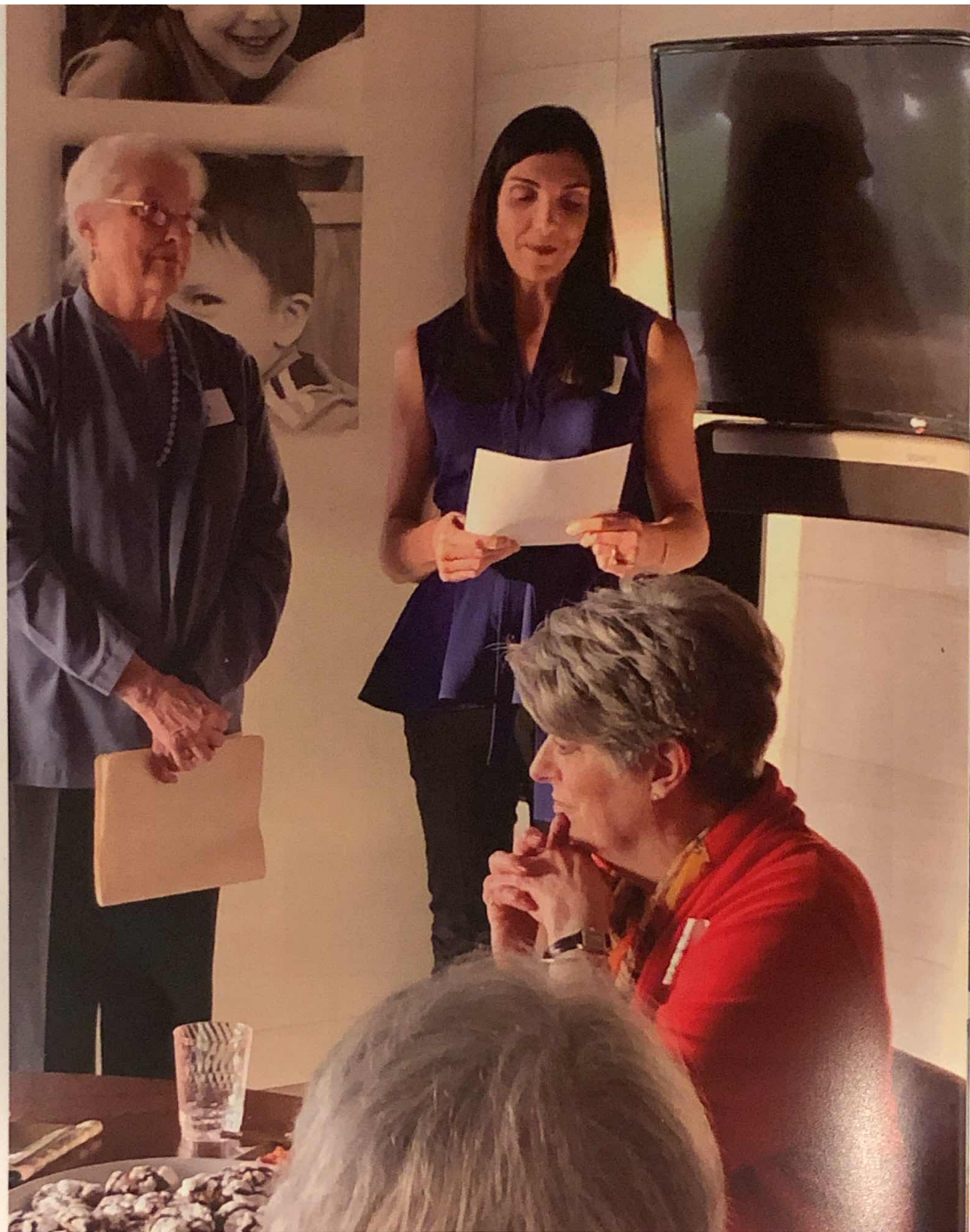
## A LIFE OF GIVING BACK

For Lola Deane, community is key. And after an absence of 35 years, she is back on Mercer Island, the community she worked so hard to help during the three decades she lived here.

Deane and her pediatrician husband, Phil, moved to Mercer Island in 1957. It was a much smaller place then – about half the size it is now. “It was a special time in the life of Mercer Island. We gained a park system, city services, and social services,” said Deane.

Many longtime Island residents remember that Deane was the first owner of Island Books. Deane’s Children’s Park, aka the Dragon Park, is named for Lola and her husband, who helped develop it in conjunction with the Mercer Island Preschool Association. But perhaps, Deane’s most lasting legacy is in two of the civic programs she helped launch and develop that continue to contribute to the community in which we all live: Mercer Island Youth and Family Services and the Mercer Island Community Fund.

Started in 1985 in the wake of the city’s 25th-anniversary celebration, the community fund was seeded with money raised at an auction. Thirty-five years later, the fund, run by an all-volunteer board, continues to give grants that enrich and enhance the community. A small sampling of the scores of organizations receiving grants: Shakespeare in the Park, Athletes for Kids, the Island Crest Park Renovation, NW Parkinson’s Foundation in Mercer Island, MI Band



Boosters, the MI Farmers’ Market, the Mercer Island Historical Society, and Mostly Music in the Park.

Deane, who left Mercer Island in 1985 soon after starting the community fund, lived internationally and eventually settled on Shaw Island. “I failed retirement three times,” she said, laughing. Widowed in 2007, Deane is back on the Island, living at Covenant Shores. “I was so ready to be back. I’m having a wonderful time.”

“Community-building is the most important thing we can do. You need to be present where you are,” said Deane. Honored by the community fund at a gathering in May, she said she’s impressed by the current board of the organization she started all those years ago and admires their plans to get the

word out about the work they do. “Shortage of funds is a fact of life in all small cities. It’s always going to be a factor,” said Deane. Lola supports the board’s plan to expand its donor base and raise more money to help the Island. To learn more about the Mercer Island Community Fund or to donate, visit [www.WeLoveMI.org](http://www.WeLoveMI.org).

Not one to sit still, Deane, now in her eighties, is back at work, contributing to the community where she lives. “I’m volunteering at the MIYFS Thrift Shop, sorting through books. I love it!” she said.