



Coming home to *shake the Southland*

The new academic year is well underway, fall is in the air, and the 2023 Clemson Football season has officially begun. It's a great time to be a Clemson Tiger!

During the pregame activities for last Saturday's first home game of the season, we celebrated the official opening of the new and beautiful Tiger Walk with a ribbon cutting. During this time, we honored the generosity of the Brown Family. Jim and



Candace are incredible supporters of Clemson, and we are profoundly grateful for their generosity and leadership of our University and Clemson Athletics. Thank you, Jim and Candace, for impacting the lives of our students, student-athletes and the entire Clemson Family!



The football team has been preparing throughout the week to face off against Florida Atlantic today — and they aren't the only ones. Rain or shine, in the hottest and coldest of temperatures, the Clemson University Tiger Band prepares for gamedays in Memorial Stadium. On these Saturdays in Death Valley, they are there long before the first whistle blows and long after the last fan exits the stadium. They energize and motivate the players on the field and lead the cheers of our fans in the stands.

“It’s the sound that shakes the Southland,” and the gameday experience would not be complete without it.

Whether playing for 82,000 fans in Death Valley or rehearsing throughout the week, every opportunity to perfect their performance is impacting the unique Clemson Experience for members of Tiger Band.

It’s the Clemson Experience Carmel Michael “Mike” Cheatham, Sr. ’80 and Carmel Michael Cheatham, Jr. ’12 know well. Tiger Band is where the father and son made lasting memories as students. And today, through Mike’s thoughtful generosity, he is committed to making sure that these experiences will continue for future members of Tiger Band.

Growing up, Mike never had a place he called home or planted solid roots. He moved frequently with his parents and brother — from Williamston, South Carolina to Greensboro, North Carolina, and eventually finished high school in Virginia. After graduating from Clemson with a degree in mechanical engineering, he worked for SCANA Corporation — now Dominion Energy — for 39 years. During that time, he lived in Columbia, South Carolina, but he never had the feeling of being *home*.

As a high school student with his sights set on college, Clemson was the only school Mike applied to. He knew he wanted to “follow the family tradition.” Forty years later, it was the clear choice again — this time the location for retirement. Clemson was a place he always felt at home, and he knew this is where he wanted to retire. He says, “this is where my family started.”



Mike and Michael are carrying on a long family history as Clemson Tigers. For more than 100 years, the Cheatham family’s roots have been firmly planted in Clemson’s soil. Mike’s grandfather, Robert Joseph “Joe” Cheatham, graduated from Clemson in 1916, and Mike’s father, Bob, graduated in 1949. In 2012, Michael became a fourth generation Clemson graduate.

Mike remembers the first time he visited Clemson. It was, of course, for a football game. He was in the seventh grade and remembers his mother made fried chicken and ham biscuits. The gameday experience was a lot different then. With no designated parking spot needed, they drove straight into Clemson and parked near the West End Zone. They purchased tickets on the north side of the stadium. That was the beginning of Mike’s love for Clemson.

Each generation of the Cheatham family lived in a variety of areas; however, fate brought each of them back to their family’s roots in the Clemson area. It’s where they established their family’s legacy. It’s a family legacy Mike is exceptionally proud of — that he is committed to keeping alive through current and planned gifts.

Mike is passionate about supporting Tiger Band because he has seen firsthand how dedicated they are to music and the University. Mike wants to reward their hard work, enhance their Clemson Experience, and attract the most talented musicians to Clemson.

In addition to his support to Tiger Band, Mike has established The Cheatham Family Scholarship Endowment to support students universitywide.

“Our family has been successful because of our Clemson degrees,” he says, adding that Michael was fortunate to receive several scholarships as a Clemson student. Feeling the direct impact of that, he wants to pay it forward to the next generation.

“It’s a quality education, and I want to help people who cannot afford to get here,” he says.

Mike first gave to Clemson when Michael was a student and playing in Tiger Band. After seeing how his company would match his contributions, he was inspired to give even more — because he wanted to have an even greater impact. It’s something he encourages everyone to take advantage of. The matching gift program has been a huge addition to the growth of his scholarship endowment. He also encourages others to truly consider how Clemson can be a part of their estate plan. Not only is it meaningful and impactful; it is also financially smart and strategic. There are tremendous tax benefits with planned gifts, and Clemson’s Gift & Estate Planning team is a dynamic resource that will help you make a plan that is mutually beneficial to you, your family and the University.

Mike has invested in the future of Clemson so his family will continue to have a meaningful impact on our students and to establish a legacy that will live on through future generations of Cheathams — especially with his first grandchild on the way. Establishing a future gift and/or creating a named endowment will ensure that their legacy will grow in perpetuity through future generations of Tigers.

To current students and those in the future who are destined to be Tigers, Mike shares this advice: “Get involved. Enjoy your time at Clemson and stay involved after you graduate. I met lifelong friends here.” Mike’s closest friends are those he met as a mechanical engineering major. Following graduation, they purchased football tickets together for many years. In the beginning, they had 16 tickets. Mike now purchases his tickets with Michael; however, the group still maintains their gameday traditions with a tailgate that includes wives, children and grandchildren.

And on some Friday afternoons before home football games, you will find Mike watching Tiger Band practicing for Saturday’s performance. It gives him a feeling of pride and appreciation. Rain or shine, hot or cold, you can always count on Tiger Band to lift our spirits and make our worries and concerns melt away. And with Mike’s visionary and generous support — both now and for the future — they will continue to grow and enhance the Tiger Band program for generations to come.

Whether you're at the game today or later this season, I strongly encourage you to stay in your seats at halftime and watch the Tiger Band performance. I marvel at their ability to create an amazing experience for our fans that is captivating and exhilarating. Each band member plays a crucial role. Just imagine if we all followed their example and played our part in making sure that a Clemson education is affordable for the students who are committed to achieving excellence — and we each made a commitment to providing our students with an even richer experience that will shape them into the leaders and innovators who will solve our greatest challenges.



Join me in cheering on our members of Tiger Band — both on and off the field!

As you think of the role you can play in the future for our University and students, we encourage you to visit the Gift & Estate Planning [website](#) to find useful online resources that will guide you along your financial and philanthropic journey. For information about general estate planning, we offer a free [Wills Guide](#), which is available to help you with your ideas and plans before visiting with your attorney and financial advisors. We enjoy helping you find answers to your questions and hope you will contact us directly via email at giving@clermson.edu.

Fall is an exciting time to be on our beautiful campus, and we hope you are making plans to attend one of the many sporting events to support our student-athletes — or just taking a stroll through our brilliant campus. When you visit, please be sure to drop by to say, “hello.” We love seeing you in Clemson!

Go Tigers! Beat the Owls!