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Introduction of Joyce Hecht, delivered at the Enrichment Dinner on June 6, 2006

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A special person arrives on the scene and life is changed forever. Joyce is that person for Grand Valley and for me. When David Hecht from Grand Rapids met Joyce Feldstein from Milwaukee in the University of Wisconsin library, he checked her out instead of a book. That act was to have a profound effect on Grand Valley State University. Possessed of law degrees and children, the Hechts were persuaded by Bill Seidman to leave Milwaukee so David could join the Grand Rapids law firm of Vander Veen, Freihofer and Cook. Before he was settled in, he said to me, “I have a wife, Joyce, who has development experience at Marquette. If you hire her she will be worth more than you can pay her.” I did and he was right.

She brought with her vision, imagination, determination, and sweet tenacity, and soon we had a public television station. She didn’t know a field goal from a touchdown, but she persuaded
those more knowledgeable about the game to build a stadium. Many said we could not and should not come downtown, but no one stops Joyce. Look at the commemorative plaque of donors in the Eberhard Center. She mobilized an army of givers to overcome the nay Sayers. With the help of corporate leaders, she led the funding for programs and buildings – DeVos, Cook, Sebastian, Pew, Kennedy, Padnos, Keller, Tassell, Kirkhof, Johnson, and Hager were her enablers, along with most of us here tonight. From engineering to the arts, there isn’t a balance sheet or a brick that doesn’t bear Joyce’s imprint.

Joyce’s coming to Grand Valley when she did appears providential. It’s not easy for a new and small institution to find the right person to lead its fund-raising, the right development person to help it fulfill its mission. Often Paul Johnson as Board chairman, Joyce and I formed a kind of mom and pop development team in search of the dollars to make Grand Valley what it should be. Of course, Joyce and those about her did the hard staff work, and Joyce kept us on track. Tonight we tell Joyce we know her role
in all that we see about us and we thank her. She might well paraphrase the motto of the State of Michigan if asked about her work, “Si queris amoenam academia, circumspice!” If you seek a brighter place of learning, look about you. She was there!

Mr. Chairman, I present Joyce Feldstein Hecht for the Arend D. Lubbers award.