Wagner College holds tea party for new ‘first lady’

On Wednesday, a noontime tea took place that only a true Staten Islander could appreciate. It marked the official welcoming of Jan Martin, an educator who is the new “first lady” of Wagner College, Grymes Hill. Her husband, Joel Martin, began his tenure as the 19th president of the school on July 1.

Wagner Guild President Aletta Diamond made the introductions to attendees in the school’s faculty room, a collection of about 50 guests, most of whom were Staten Island natives and/or proud alums of the college.


Martin stood up to accept flowers from Diamond, and made her own introductions to the crowd. She told a touching story of her work in York, Pennsylvania, at a prior education post, where she led a STEAM Academy.

“Joel and I really feel we’ve met our match with Staten Island,” Martin later told the Advance.

“We feel so connected to the Wagner community.”

And, like a true Staten Islander those connections already turned up her six degrees of separation to the borough. Martin hails from Pittsford, New York, which is the very suburb where meetings happened about a century ago with the Lutheran pastors who created Wagner College.

She said she will take a year off from her teaching career, adding that she wants to get to know the students, assimilate to her new hometown and support her husband as the school’s new president.

She said she has some surprises in store with food and, yes, she does enjoy kitchen work.

She learned how to cook from her grandmothers.

As noted in her Wagner College bio: “She says the term ‘procrastibaking,’ which the New York Times food writer Julia Moskin has defined as ‘the practice of baking something completely unnecessary, with the intention of avoiding ‘real’ work’ — perfectly fits her, because she enjoys using baking to bring joy to others and celebrate milestones in their lives.”

Martin spoke to each person in the room and keenly listened to guests.

Eva Lazar Gabriel concluded the tea with a touching version of “God Bless America” on a keyboard sung by Herman “Bud” Emigholz.