



John and Jeanelle Lust with sons Joe and Jack

## John and Jeanelle Lust: Indebted Graduates Give Back

By Christina Salem

When the word indebted is used to describe someone's college experience, it could easily be mistaken for a play on words relating to student loans. When Augustana alumni John and Jeanelle Lust use the word, however, they are employing its true definition: thankful, grateful, beholden. That is how they feel about Augustana.

The couple met while at the college and both have a string of impressive achievements since graduating. A native of Madison, S.D., Jeanelle Robson Lust '91, was a government and history major at Augustana and went on to Creighton Law School, where she graduated summa cum laude in 1994. She finished No.1 in her class, receiving the Faculty of Law Highest Triennial Average Award for having the highest grade point average after each year in law school, and was assistant editor of the Creighton Law Review. She is now a civil litigator and managing partner with the firm Knudsen, Berkheimer, Richardson & Endacott, LLP in Lincoln, Neb. where she says she loves "the intellectual challenge and the thrill of the courtroom."

John Lust '90, is from Aberdeen, S.D., and majored in history at Augustana. Active in College Republicans, he volunteered for political campaigns in South Dakota, including U.S. Senator Jim Abdnor, while still a student and continued in that profession after graduation, working for Don Frankenfeld's U.S. House of Representatives campaign. He then accepted a position assisting Frankenfeld in starting a statewide venture capital firm. "I loved that job because I was able to travel around the state and get to know people from all over South Dakota," he said.

### Successful move

In 1995, he wanted to try something new, so he moved to Lincoln, Neb., where Jeanelle just happened to be living, and opened a JD Byrider used car and finance franchise. Not having any experience with used cars, he utilized his liberal arts education and business acumen and became very successful, eventually leaving the franchise and renaming the company "Car Hop." Before being bought out last summer by a private equity firm, he and his two business partners had opened 19 offices in six states. The man who used to manage a hectic travel and business schedule is now thoroughly enjoying time at home with his family, where he currently manages life and activities for their two sons, 9-year-old Joe, and 7-year-old Jack.

When asked about all of their successes, the couple credits Augustana. Both of them expressed their gratitude for the caring community and their mentors. Jeanelle describes the importance of, "great relationships with professors who cared about me and looked out for me, including Dr. Matz, Dr. Oyos and Dr. Schotten." She explains how important all of them were to her development, especially Dr. Schotten. "Without him, I would not be a lawyer," she said.

John also credits his professors for, "the profound influence on where I am today and why I have been successful. They recognized something in me and encouraged and empowered me. I look back and am amazed by what a major influence Augustana has had on my life."

### Sense of gratitude

Not surprisingly, the couple is very supportive of Augustana. A longtime member of the Augustana Fellows, John joined the Fellows Cabinet several years ago and recently was named to the College's Board of Trustees. John says he was grateful to be asked to participate. "I was looking for a meaningful diversion, and before long I felt reconnected with that wonderful Augustana experience. I wish all grads understood that the Augie community can be a connection for life, from reconnecting with friends and networking with fellow alumni to gaining the satisfaction of giving back."

John and Jeanelle talk again about that deep sense of gratitude for Augustana. "We give back because we want others to have the same experience we had. We feel strongly that alumni and friends need to care for this place or it will wither away. The only way Augustana can grow is through active participation by alumni and friends."

The couple also cites perhaps their greatest joy and hope in supporting the College, "So that the Augustana that we know and love will be there for our two sons when it is time for them to go to college."