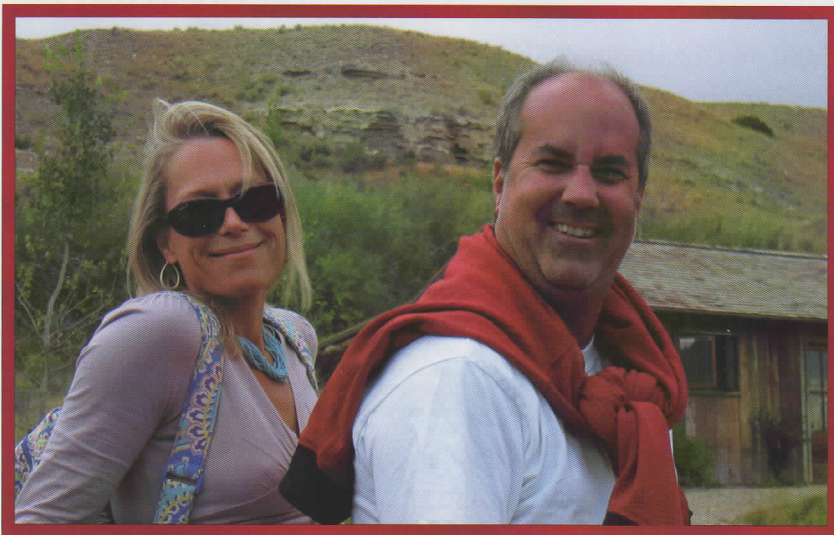


# Making a Difference

Through Planned Gifts to St. Christopher's

## Teaching Family Philanthropy with a Gift to St. Christopher's



Laura and Mark Merhige

The adage goes, “when life hands you lemons, make lemonade,” and that is exactly what Mark and Laura Merhige decided to do when they included a gift to St. Christopher's School in their wills.

Just a few years ago Mark and Laura had to deal with the devastating loss of three parents within two years. Amazingly, in the midst of their grief they stumbled upon an interesting healing process. Mark says, “One wouldn't think that talking about your own mortality would be cathartic, but that's what happened. As executor of my parents' estates, I realized the importance and the significance of charitable planning. I started to think of the things I wanted to perpetuate, and that's when Laura and I began having some serious discussions about our wills.”

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*Laura and Mark Merhige transform grief into gratitude through bequest to school*

## Why You Need a Will

It seems that the biggest enemy in estate planning is not the IRS, the state, or a contrary relative... it is procrastination. No matter how difficult, it is important for everyone – regardless of income, marital status, or age – to put together a plan so your estate can be properly managed. Perhaps the following will help you get past your procrastination and reach peace of mind knowing your plan is in place.

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L to R: Laura, Alex, Rennie '10, Sayre, Mariah, Mark

“We identified what is important to us, and St. Christopher’s School made the top of the list. St. Christopher’s has done an amazing job of educating our son. It goes beyond what happens in the classroom, it is the sense of community, of wonderful, caring people who teach and mentor the kids as if they were their own. We are blessed to be a part of this extended family and included St. Christopher’s in our will to show our appreciation for what the school has done for Alex, Rennie and the entire Merhige family.”

Beyond the emotional reasons for making the gift, the Merhiges also saw their philanthropic choice as a teachable moment for their four children. “This gift was a great opportunity to talk to our kids about recognizing and supporting the things in their life that have had a positive influence in making them the people they are today. They were very supportive and proud of our decision.”

Designating a gift to St. Christopher’s School through your will is one of the simplest gifts you can make. You can create a will, or add a codicil to amend a current document with language to give a specific dollar amount, a percentage, or residual of your estate to St. Christopher’s School. Gifts from wills support named scholarships, chairs of distinguished teaching, and building projects. For many the largest obstacle in the entire planning process is talking about death. “There is never a perfect opportunity, but you should not delay in making plans to take care of the people and places that you care about,” advises Mark. ♣



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