

# SAINT MARY'S SCHOOL

## Alumnae Profile

### Leigh McAdoo Kempf '88C

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#### An Educated Woman Makes a Difference

Leigh McAdoo Kempf '88C is a successful **CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™**, Financial Advisor, career mentor, wife, and mother to two teenage daughters – and a black lab named “Bocephus.” A North Carolina native, Leigh grew up in Greensboro, where she attended public school. Thanks to her mother Judy, who herself had an all-girls educational experience, Leigh found her way to Saint Mary's Junior College. It was this experience which launched not only a belief in herself, but a desire to give back and help others.

#### The Impact of One Professor

Leigh McAdoo proudly “dethroned” her older brother (born in 1964) from his only child status when she arrived in 1968. “We had a great relationship growing up, but Brant never let me forget who was older,” she says and laughs. “He was a typical older brother and was just four years old when I came along. He basically ruled the roost until he left for high school.”

Leigh's parents Brantley and Judy McAdoo both understood the value of single-gender education, and while Brant went to Virginia Episcopal School for high school, Leigh stayed home to finish and graduate from Page High School. Their mother had an all-girls' experience while living in Colorado before transferring to the University of Texas, where she was one of only a few women that graduated with a business degree. “My mother is resourceful and savvy,” Leigh explains. “After VES, Brant went to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and the family knew about Saint Mary's because it was where many girls went before heading off to Chapel Hill.”

After applying at Saint Mary's and being accepted, Judy drove Leigh to 900 Hillsborough. “Mom dropped me off, and that was the beginning of my relationship with Saint Mary's, although I didn't know it then.”

In fact, when Leigh arrived, she explains that there was a bit of transition for her. “I had to catch up academically after attending public schools, as I did not finish high school at Saint Mary's. But, I caught up and I did well because of one professor in particular.”

Leigh recalls that Saint Mary's and Dr. Jack Hume made a difference in her life. “Here was this professor who would literally throw chalk at me to wake me up if I started dozing off in class. He would tell me nearly every day after attending his class, “Don't you realize how much potential you have? You have the brightest mind and can be anything you put your mind to, so don't waste it.”

The rigor of Saint Mary's, Dr. Hume's influence, and Leigh's renewed dedication to her studies helped her excel. “Dr. Hume convinced me I had the potential to do great things,” she says and smiles. “He was the very first mentor I had in my life. I am forever grateful of his interest in me and hope I can inspire others like he inspired me.”

As a student Leigh got involved on campus. She was a member of the Circle and was president of the sophomore class. She says her class was really well-balanced and a “big fun group” to get to know. “My experience at Saint Mary's gave me the courage to ask questions and to have confidence in myself.”

Leigh applied and was accepted into Chapel Hill. She attended and lived both years with Jane Pattishall Snyder '88C. “I am so grateful Jane and I had our UNC experience together. We've enjoyed getting our families together throughout the years, and we still get together when we can.”

Leigh received a bachelor's degree in Speech and Communications. “I thought I'd become a television or radio broadcaster. I'm not one yet, but you never know! My mother encouraged me to understand the importance of learning how to juggle a work/life balance, setting me up for success in life regardless of what career path I chose.”

Saint Mary's has also helped her develop a foundation of skills that included understanding and taking advantage of networking. At Chapel Hill, those skills grew. “Combined, those experiences lead me to



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study a year abroad in London where I worked for Citibank, which was my introduction to the financial industry.”

When Leigh came back to the U.S., she lived in Nantucket for a second summer with Olga McCoy Faison '88C, waiting on tables, having fun and saving money. She then went to Atlanta for a brief time “for another big city experience” working for Holiday Inn Worldwide in franchise accounting. Leigh didn't know that this was where she would discover not only her future career, but a husband as well.

### *New Love, New Life*

Enjoying life both professionally and socially in Atlanta, North Carolina was calling her home. This had nothing to do with her boyfriend, Billy, moving back to Chapel Hill to start a business where he grew up (wink, wink)! “My Atlanta roommate's father, Pascal Boyd, worked in the financial industry as a stock broker. I went to see him for an advice interview,” she recalls. “I was there to network and ask about potential job opportunities he might know about or could help introduce me to others, but he offered me a job working with him instead.”

Coming back to North Carolina gave Leigh and Billy time to grow their relationship. “We eventually married in 1998 and settled in the Chapel Hill.”

Professionally, Pascal would become Leigh's second significant life mentor. He took tremendous interest in Leigh and together they managed and not only grew the practice, but evolved it from being simply stock brokers to becoming financial advisors focusing on comprehensive, big-picture strategies and building full-service financial plans for clients.

Today, Leigh continues to practice as a **CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™** on her current team, KG & Associates at Merrill Lynch. In addition to growing and managing her practice, she is a leader in the local chapter of Merrill Lynch's Women's Exchange as the Recruiting and Advocacy Chair. She is passionate about inspiring and educating women through her “Women's Forums.” Topics for the discussions have included: Navigating Change, Visualizing Prosperity, Gender Lens Investing, Women and Investing, Women and Financial Wellness, Behavioral Finance, etc.

Leigh says, “These Forums are for creating a safe space for women to discuss and understand their resources for aging parents and elder care, divorce, widowhood, children, education, and more. That's one of the things I'm so excited about at Saint Mary's because of their new alumnae and student programming they're creating this year.”

Leigh is now involved at her alma mater not only as a member of the Alumnae Council, but also with the school's student career night as an alumna with whom they can network. “I'm also involved in sharing opportunities to intern or work for Merrill Lynch.”

As an advocate within her industry, Leigh says, “we need more women.” She also has a passion for serving women in general and that it was the education she received at Saint Mary's – and the significance of the impact Dr. Hume had on her – that gave her the foundational skills and self-confidence she needed to light a fire inside of her that's stayed to this day.

Over time, Leigh and Billy's family also grew, and they became parents to two girls, Alleigh – who recently graduated and was recruited to play lacrosse at Bryant University this fall – and Judy Kate – a rising 10<sup>th</sup> grader who loves horses and is a competitive jumper. “That's why I also felt a call to give back,” she says. “Having two girls who I've watched have access to so much more than we had when I was a young girl means we can make even more great things happen. It's powerful.”

Leigh always knew she'd be involved in Saint Mary's. “All my Saint Mary's girlfriends knew Billy because I brought him to all our reunions and alumnae events,” she says and laughs. “But, when you have small children and you work, you go ‘into the trenches’ just to survive those early years. Though I couldn't give back then, I can do so now in many different ways.”

And she does. In addition to her membership on the Alumnae Council and volunteer service on career panels and at alumnae networking events, Leigh also serves on the Saint Mary's Forever Campaign committee, gives annually to Saint Mary's Annual Fund, and stays in touch with her classmates who are now lifelong friends. “Even my headshot for this profile was taken by my SMC roommate, Natalie Carter Hyde '86HS '88C! I am so proud of her success,” she adds.

“It's a special feeling when you walk onto this campus after being away,” Leigh explains. “And, I want today's Saint Mary's girls to benefit from the legacy our alumnae have created. That means giving back with my time and expertise, and to also give back through my gifts of support, because without alumnae support, Saint Mary's might not be forever, and we need it to be.”

Leigh McAdoo Kempf '88C truly embodies the spirit of Saint Mary's women who are intelligent, resilient, resourceful, passionate, and nurturing, and who are educated to make a difference in their communities and the world. We are grateful for the impact she's having on the world and our girls.

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