

SAINT MARY'S SCHOOL

Alumnae Profile

Heather Moore Thompson '88HS '90C

Director of Operations & Development

REALTOR® Foundation of Wake County, Raleigh, NC

The Old Girls' Network

Heather Moore Thompson '88HS '90C and her brother Battle were born and raised in Rocky Mount. Their parents, Benjamin and Sue Battle Moore '63C, gave them an idyllic childhood that involved playing outside with friends all day and evening and the courage to try new things. Following in her mother's footsteps, Heather would become a Saint Mary's girl and later create a legacy of her own through her two daughters, Grace Battle Thompson '18 and May Thompson (9/D). Through the network of Saint Mary's and the connections with other graduates, Heather's professional success has resulted in an ability to create change in her community and an opportunity to give back at her alma mater.

From Rocky Mount to Raleigh

"Battle and I had a wonderful childhood with an Episcopal upbringing," recalls Heather Moore Thompson. "Today, you'd call it 'old school' and traditional. My mother would send us out the door to play at first light and tell us to not come home until she'd rung the dinner bell!"

Heather shares her memories of days playing with friends, using her imagination, and exploring in a safe community environment. "We'd play 'Ghost in the Graveyard' at night and run all over the place. Back then, Rocky Mount was a thriving town, Hardee's was headquartered there, and downtown businesses were booming."

She also remembers her mother going back and forth to Saint Mary's. "She was always active and attending this meeting or that event. She loved Saint Mary's and she shared that love with us."

Growing up, Heather attended the Rocky Mount public school system. "I attended Rocky Mount Senior High during my freshman and sophomore years, which was a large public high school. But, in 10th grade, I went as an exchange student to Argentina."

Heather credits this global travel experience with exposing her to a much bigger world and opening her eyes to the fact that she needed a different experience as the next step in her education. "Knowing what I did about Saint Mary's from my mother, there was no question that was where I wanted to go next."

Heather began the process of applying at Saint Mary's and then transferred for her senior year of high school. She received her diploma in 1988 and then stayed on for the next two years for junior college.

"Saint Mary's was an easy and wonderful transition," she says. "I immediately felt a sense of community and belonging. It was also the first time anyone took me seriously as a student."

During her senior year, Heather also says the high school environment felt like college because of the schedule and the fact that the school day was based on the junior college calendar. "Being at Saint Mary's during that time taught me to manage my time in a completely different way and to prepare for college. I also interacted with adults – our faculty members – on a whole new level. It was engaging and felt like a second home, because we had faculty and staff as residents on campus with us."

Having grown up Episcopalian, she loved the Saint Mary's Chapel and weekly services. "I was very involved with the Chaplain's Office as a member of the Vestry and as an Acolyte, and participated as a Eucharist minister," she says. "I was in Beacon my senior year, a member of the Granddaughter's Club, served on the Student Government Association and the college's Legislative Body, and was a member of The Circle, which was an honorary club founded in 1938 to promote a spirit of cooperation among the student body and between students and faculty."

She was also active in the social clubs MAPS and the Scoop Group, which was made up of both high school and college girls, as well as on staff for both the *Stagecoach* yearbook and *The Belles*, the school newspaper, and had a very large friend-base with a network of Saint Mary's girls. At graduation, Heather was awarded the King Medal by then President Clauston Jenkins.

"Like many Saint Mary's girls, I also went to Carolina," she explains. "I was thrilled to enroll and graduate from the UNC School of Journalism just two years later with my bachelor's degree in Journalism."

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After graduating from Carolina in 1992, Heather moved to Washington, D.C. where she stayed for four years, working in public relations for corporate clients and later at a nonprofit cancer institute. "At the cancer institute, I worked with the Congressional Wives Club to put on an annual benefit gala," she recalls. "Back then, there weren't many congresswomen, so the representatives' wives joined together to fundraise for special causes in order to make their own personal, non-partisan impact where they could. Today's it's called The Congressional Club and is for all spouses of those in Congress."

Heather also remembers the learning curve that came from hailing from Eastern North Carolina and being thrust into the Capitol Hill environment.

"The first annual benefit I worked on with the Congressional Wives Club, Chanel was the premier sponsor and I had to write a press release to help market the fundraiser and their involvement," she says and laughs. "Well, I kept spelling it 'channel' and pronouncing it that way, too! Suffice to say, once it was released, I figured out how to write and say, Chanel."

Throughout her career, Heather credits the network of Saint Mary's for helping her succeed. "Saint Mary's has been an integral part of my career path," she explains. "Helen Landi '78HS '80C was my boss at my very first job in high school working as a hostess for a local restaurant."

Later, when Heather was looking to leave D.C. and return to North Carolina, she reached out to another Saint Mary's connection. "At the time, my dream was to go to work for a company like WRAL, SAS or Duke Energy. Smedes York, former Raleigh Mayor, had served as a Trustee at Saint Mary's while I was a student representative. So, I called him to ask if we could meet so I could 'pick his brain' and see if he could help me find a job in Raleigh."

At the very end of their visit, he asked her, "Where do you want to work? What are your top three choices?"

Heather recalls giving those to him and then leaving, "I was at home, and by the end of the day, a courier arrived with three signed letters of recommendation/reference for those very companies I spoke of. It was such a surprise and speaks so highly of having a Saint Mary's connection."

She returned to Raleigh and took a position in 1997 with the Department of Transportation (DOT) overseeing the America's Scenic Byways (NC), Adopt-A-Highway and Wildflower programs.

"Again, a Saint Mary's connection helped me get the position," she explains. "Helen Landi '78HS '80C became my boss at the DOT, and I was thrilled to work there for five years."

Later in 2002, Heather was approached by her alma mater and was asked to consider filling a recently vacated Alumnae Director role. "Mary McGranaham Moss '74HS was in charge of advancement and the alumnae office," she says. "The previous director, Margaret McGlohon '81C, was sure a tough act to follow, but I left the DOT and took the job because I loved Saint Mary's."

After serving her alma mater for five years as alumnae director, and as her daughters Grace Battle and May got a little older, Heather left her position at Saint Mary's to work as a freelance writer, fundraiser, and events manager for several nonprofits for the next couple years.

"My connection with Helen came to play again and provided an opportunity to go to work as the Executive Director for Keep NC Beautiful in the fall of 2009," Heather says. "Helen was on their board and saw first-hand my work at the DOT and thought I would be the perfect fit."

Nearly four years later, in 2013, Heather's next position was with the Green Chair Project working for founder Jackie Craig who was also a Saint Mary's parent and mother of Gabie Craig Frantz '10. "Gabie had already graduated when my name was mentioned to Jackie, but I was an alumna and now the parent of a Saint Mary's girl, and that connection lent instant credibility. So, I was hired!"

Heather says her connections within the vast network of Saint Mary's women and friends have helped her in so many ways. "It's a wonderful springboard and has had such positive influence on my career, and it's a great way for graduates of Saint Mary's to network and find support in their own job searches or for guidance."

In 2016, Heather left the Green Chair Project to become the Director of Development and Operations for The REALTOR® Foundation of Wake County (RFOWC), which is the nonprofit arm of the Raleigh Regional Association of REALTORS® (RRAR). The organization improves homes and communities through the collective volunteer efforts and financial donations made by members of the RRAR.

"We partner with local area nonprofits to address the needs of the homeless and help support and find temporary and permanent housing through those charities," she explains. "All the work I've done, thanks to so many in our 'Old Girls network,' prepared me for this important work I now do, and I'm so grateful."

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Heather also remains a dedicated and loyal Saint Mary's alumna who stays engaged, involved, and gives back in many ways to her alma mater.

"In life, I was always looking for a safe haven, and Saint Mary's was definitely that for me," she says. "It's where I was immediately welcomed and embraced. I stay engaged not only because of what Saint Mary's gave me and my mother, but also because of what it's continued to give me and what I see it's giving my daughters."

Heather knows she, her mother and daughters all have a shared experience as alumnae of Saint Mary's, but she also says they each have something different.

"Our experiences are each unique because of who teaches us, who inspires us, who our friends become, and how we are engaged in the fabric of life at Saint Mary's," she explains. "We experience many of the same traditions, but my daughters are being given even more than I received, which was different than what my mother received, or even the women who came before her."

Heather also says Saint Mary's is an important financial investment for parents.

"There is an enormous value to receiving a Saint Mary's education. Beyond being a college preparatory program, it's so much more because of the network of alumnae and their connections, our high caliber faculty who are residential community members, and because of the experiences gained, which are unlike any other," she explains. "Saint Mary's gives girls the safe space to take risks, fail, get back up and succeed; provides a supportive environment where they learn how to amplify their voice and know their value; and provides opportunities to discover their passions while preparing for life."

As the mother of two girls – one of whom already graduated and the other a newly minted freshman – Heather says the investment is returned a "multitude of times over" during a Saint Mary's girl's life. "There are more than 9,500 living alumnae who want to pay it forward to each other and to the young women who follow in our footsteps. Young alumnae and all graduates should leverage those opportunities and this network to help throughout their careers and life journeys. Saint Mary's women are everywhere, in every industry, in nearly every community, here and abroad! Why wouldn't you reach out?"

Saint Mary's alumnae like Heather graduate with the skills, knowledge, and integrity they need for success. Whether furthering their education, pursuing professional careers, raising their families, or leading as volunteers, our alumnae are agents for positive change in their communities. Heather's story demonstrates the power Saint Mary's women have in affecting change and in the foundation of connection they have to women who are educated to make a difference, intelligent, resilient, resourceful, passionate, and nurturing. And, we are grateful for the impact she's having on the world, in her own community, and in creating her own legacy through her two daughters.

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