

# SAINT MARY'S SCHOOL

## Alumnae Profile Series

by Chelsea Ward '09

### Hayes Willingham '02

**Occupational Therapist and Artist, Hayes Willingham.**  
Arlington, V.A.

#### *Family Ties at 900 Hillsborough*

Hayes Willingham '02 was born and raised in Rocky Mount, N.C., and found her way to Saint Mary's from her family's own personal connections. Hayes' great-grandfather, Edwin Anderson Penick, served as both Chair of the Board of Trustees and served Saint Mary's as bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina from 1923 to 1959. Bishop Penick was the founder and first president of the North Carolina Council of Churches and was chairman of the North Carolina Commission of Interracial Cooperation, His father was also an Episcopal Priest.

"My grandfather grew up in the bishop's house on campus beside the dining hall, and he became an episcopal priest too," Hayes explains. "In addition to my family's connection to Saint Mary's, it was very important to me to have the all-girls experience."

Hayes was a boarding student at Saint Mary's and started during her sophomore year of high school. She had a passion for art, which grew as she immersed herself in the Advanced Placement (AP) courses available.

"I really got into watercolors during my AP art class with Mrs. Bason," she adds.

In addition to art, Hayes enjoyed cross country, being a member of Beacon, and being involved as a dorm prefect. She enjoyed quiet moments on campus, such as Lighting O' the Grove, dorm life, and formal dinners in the dining hall.

Some of Hayes favorite teachers and courses included her humanities course with Mr. Jim Beckford and spending time in her advisory with Mrs. Moser who also taught history.

#### *The "Art" in Heart*

After Saint Mary's, Hayes stayed in Raleigh, N.C. and went to North Carolina State University (N.C. State) for college.

After living in Raleigh for a few years, she relocated to Athens, G.A. where her husband was completing his graduate degree work. While in Athens, Hayes began working for a study abroad program, creating program marketing pieces. In addition to her job, she incorporated her love of art into her day by sketching and drawing sorority houses in the city.

"I like being able to make things for people that are meaningful during that time of their life," she says.

Later, Hayes moved back to Eastern North Carolina and completed her master's degree at East Carolina University in Occupational Therapy.



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Hayes' husband received a job offer in Washington, D.C. and they moved to Arlington, V.A. where Hayes currently works at Fox Rehabilitation. Her work focuses primarily on adults 65 years and older who may have a range of diagnoses including Alzheimer's or Multiple Sclerosis.

When Hayes isn't working with occupational therapy clients, she continues to foster her love for art. She paints beautiful commissioned pieces for clients that depict the things that they love most.

"These watercolors are tangible pieces of the past," she says and smiles.

Through her online gallery, Hayes showcases her talent and passion for watercolor. Her recent pieces include homes and pet portraits. There's also a familiar landmark on her website that alumnae may recognize: a portrait of Saint Mary's chapel.

Hayes' portfolio can be viewed online at [www.hayeswillingham.com](http://www.hayeswillingham.com).

### *Gratitude for Saint Mary's*

Hayes is grateful for the opportunities she received at Saint Mary's, which is why she continues to stay connected to her alma mater.

"I appreciate the opportunities that Saint Mary's provided me and the friendships I made while I was a student."

If you ask Hayes what her advice is for current Saint Mary's girls, she says: "Really enjoy your time there."

It's a sentiment shared by many alumnae who have been interviewed as they look back on their time as students at 900 Hillsborough Street. For future generations, Hayes hopes that Saint Mary's always values the traditions, and also continues to modernize with the times.

Saint Mary's alumnae like Hayes Willingham '02 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. Hayes' story demonstrates the ability Saint Mary's women have to do big things in their lives, and we're thrilled to share her story.

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