

In the world of philanthropy, there are generous donors, and then there are visionaries who leave an indelible mark on institutions and communities.

Phillip Cazahous '70 belongs in the latter category. He is a benevolent soul with a passion for education and a deep love for his alma mater. His extraordinary commitment to Archbishop Riordan High School has transformed the landscape of the institution's athletic program. With a generous initial donation to build a state-of-the-art athletic field and a remarkable multi-million dollar legacy gift to maintain the complex in perpetuity, Cazahous has secured his place as a true champion of Riordan.

A self-made man and devoted alumnus of the school, Cazahous has always carried a profound sense of gratitude for the education he received at Riordan. Growing up in San Francisco, he experienced firsthand the transformative power of a Catholic education. Cazahous's teachers and coaches had a lasting impact on him. The school's emphasis on academic excellence, Catholic values, and a strong sense of community gave him the foundational qualities to become the man he is today. And his experiences on the track team—finishing 2nd in the half-mile at the WCAL championship meet in his senior year—taught him the value of hard work and perseverance. To this day, Cazahous remains proud of the friends he made and the lessons he learned training and competing on Riordan's track.

And in a moment that would forever change the course of Riordan's athletic facilities, Cazahous teamed up with Steven Herrera '76, Michael '71 and Steven Mayer '72, the Carl Gellert and Celia Berta Gellert Foundation, and a host of other generous supporters to turn the dream of a new athletic field into a reality. Riordan's largest classroom, a combined football-baseball-soccer-lacrosse field on the west side of campus, has become one of the primary symbols of Riordan's renaissance.

Some members of the Riordan community have credited the co-ed transition as the source of Riordan's incredible enrollment increases in recent years; however, without the field, the move to coeducation could not have reached its full success. In truth, neither the co-ed transition nor the field project alone could have inspired such a high demand for the school. But the combination of the two has proven to be a winning enterprise.

Cazahous's amazing contribution did not stop at his support for the building of the field. Recognizing the importance of ongoing maintenance and development, he has made an unprecedented multi-million dollar Legacy Gift. This endowment ensures that the field will be maintained and replaced in perpetuity, assuring its longevity for generations of students to come.

As an accomplished accountant, a member of Riordan's Board of Trustees, and a former chair of the school's Finance Committee, Cazahous understands the importance of sound financial stewardship. The structure of his gift is a reflection of that pragmatism. Consequently, the impact of this legacy gift is immeasurable. Not only does it guarantee the upkeep of the field, but it also paves the way for additional programs and opportunities for Riordan students. The field will continue to be a source of unity, upholding a tradition of athletic excellence and providing a space for the community to gather with a sense of pride—the same kind of pride that Phillip felt as a student and that he has felt since returning to the community in such a positive way.

About 10 years ago, a group of Riordan students made room for Cazahous to find a seat on the streetcar at West Portal Station. In his speech to the student body upon receiving the Chaminade Award in 2019, Phillip said the following about his interaction with the students.

“At this moment, I realized that it was time for me to come back to Riordan. The values from fifty years ago have not changed. A number of Chaminade Award recipients from decades ago when I was here at Riordan instilled in me the value of respecting my fellow man.”

Cazahous's extraordinary generosity has made a lasting mark on Riordan, transforming its athletic program and creating a legacy of excellence and community. His commitment to education, athletics, and the betterment of society serves as an inspiration to all. Cazahous's legacy is not just a gift to one institution but a testament to the enduring impact that dedicated philanthropy can have on the lives of countless individuals and the communities they call home.

