

“The Money Isn’t The success, It Is The Giving Back”

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Focus Magazine, Winter/Spring 2018*

I recently had the opportunity to speak with Megan Maguire Nicoletti about her parents and the work of the Maguire Foundation. In October the Maguire Foundation sponsored PBIDA’s 39th conference in Philadelphia on Literacy and Learning Disabilities. With his wife Frances and daughter Megan in attendance, we recognized James Maguire because he has spoken so publicly of his own challenges with dyslexia and how he used his disability as a source of motivation. His remarkable ‘rags to riches’ story, documented in his book, *Just Show Up Every Day*, details his humble beginnings and the academic struggles that ultimately caused him to lose a basketball scholarship and an opportunity to pursue college education. But the story did not end there because James Maguire is not one to give up. After service in Korea, Maguire once again enrolled in higher education. His great fortune this time was to be accepted at St. Joseph’s University in Philadelphia. There he gained the attention of the Rev. Hunter Guthrie, an early pioneer in dyslexia, who recognized what was at the root of Maguire’s struggles. With Guthrie’s help Maguire eventually graduated with a 3.0 GPA. After graduation, Maguire went into the insurance business and he eventually built what would become a one billion dollar company.



In October of 2000, James, together with his wife Frances, created the Maguire Foundation. As noted on the organization’s website, the foundation is committed to improving the quality of life for people through investment in education, arts and humanities, and through helping to alleviate hunger and homelessness. As Megan described, her parents are now focusing on giving away the fortune they worked so long and diligently to build. “The money wasn’t the success, it is the giving back,” she shared emphatically. In December of 2016, Megan Maguire Nicoletti, number five of the Maguires’ nine children, became the president and CEO of the Maguire Foundation and now, she is leading the work of giving back.

After meeting with Maguire Nicoletti, I have no doubts that the Maguire Foundation and her parents’ intentions are in good hands. What struck me most about our conversation was the seriousness of purpose and passion Megan is bringing to her work. It is clear that she has been reflecting about the responsibility bestowed upon her. She understands her role in the organization as one of honoring and protecting the vision and mission her parents have had for the foundation and its work. Megan stresses that the foundation was made possible by the work of *both* of her parents. James Maguire gets much of the recognition because he was the one who earned the fortune that now funds the good work of the Maguire Foundation. However, Megan emphasizes that equal credit goes to her mother Frances. It was Frances, whose constant and heart-filled work of raising a large family and building a stable home life, who gave James the foundation that enabled him to focus his energies on building and managing his business.

When Megan speaks of her parents, her love and admiration for them is readily apparent. She describes her mother as all heart and love and noted that she is also an accomplished artist. Of her father, she states that he is proof that a businessman can have integrity and generosity and achieve great success because of, and not despite, high moral character. The motto of the foundation the Maguires created, "*we are men and women for others*," is based on the teachings of St. Ignatius Loyola. The Maguires are indeed a man and a woman for others and they raised their children to be the same. My conversation with Megan suggests that her parents were quite successful in raising their daughter to be a passionate, generous and spiritual person. She speaks of the opportunity to head the foundation and to work with her father as, "...a gift from God; an opportunity to slow down, listen and be present" for her father and to learn from him. Megan conveyed awe as she spoke of being able to be part of work that is so critical and have the opportunity to serve as a role model.

I asked Megan if she felt in any way fearful or hesitant about the vastly important work that has become primarily her responsibility. Megan has thought deeply on this topic. "Not fear but an awareness. It is really important to stay focused. You want to be generous and compassionate. We have a social responsibility to have a greater impact." As a former teacher, education is important to Megan. "The greatest gift we can give a child is education." She went on to speak about education as a source of opportunity and what will have the greatest eventual impact on hunger and homelessness. It is clear that as Megan strives to sharpen the Maguire Foundation's focus, education will continue to be central. She suggested that the foundation and the work of giving away a fortune to serve the greater good, calls for a second book picking up the story from where *Just Show Up Every Day* ends. No doubt, Megan Maguire Nicoletti will have a critical role in this sequel!