The story of Ed and Marie Rusher Kelley is far-reaching and powerful, spanning medical missions, tragedy, generous giving, and adventure. They live in the Los Angeles area, where Marie works long hours as a pediatrician caring for underserved children of largely poor, Hispanic families. Her husband, Ed, is a wireless technology innovator and consultant. Together, they care for and enjoy their 24-year-old son, Joshua.

Marie graduated from Seattle Pacific University in 1966 with a bachelor’s degree in nursing. She has several family members who also attended, including Marie’s mother, uncle, and aunt. All three of Marie’s relatives became teachers.

“I heard a lot about Seattle Pacific from them, so that’s where I wanted to go,” says Marie, whose brother — a physician living on Camano Island, Washington — also graduated from SPU. “I came intending to get my nursing degree and then go on to be a medical missionary.”

After earning a master’s degree in public health, Marie headed off to South Africa, where she spent three years in a hospital serving the Xhosa tribe. She remembers when the only available doctor (an SPU alumnus) got sick with hepatitis, leaving Marie largely on her own to care for a steady stream of sick and injured people.
“I delivered babies, did suturing, and directed a whole wing of tuberculosis patients,” Marie says. “We handled lots of malnutrition, measles, and intestinal parasites, and even an occasional tetanus case. I really learned a lot of medicine.”

Caring for children suffering from malnutrition got Marie interested in pediatrics. She came back to the United States to enroll in medical school at the University of Washington, where she graduated at the top of her class in only three years. She planned to go back overseas, but during her pediatrics residency in Los Angeles, Marie’s life took an unexpected turn one day, while sitting in a church pew.

A man named Ed sat next to her at West Los Angeles Baptist Church. They shared a hymnbook. Ed invited Marie to go with him to a friend’s wedding. One thing led to another. In January 2009, the couple marked 30 years of marriage.

It has been a life with many joyous experiences, but in their early years together, Ed and Marie suffered an inconsolable loss. The couple’s first son, Matthew, nearly drowned in their backyard pool. A blond-haired 18-month-old, he lingered in a coma for two years before dying in 1986.

In honor of the son they lost, Ed and Marie established the Matthew Kelley Medical Scholarship Endowment in 1992. When the fund was started, the Kelleys were able to take advantage of an employer matching-gift program that made it possible to add significantly to the endowment.

Scholarships from this endowment are given to Christian pre-medical school students who want to pursue medical school as preparation for mission work. The endowment is designed to ease the burden of paying the high cost of a medical education, making it easier for new doctors to go on to the mission field.

“We want to help someone go in my place,” says Marie of this endowment. “I loved Seattle Pacific, and we had hopes that our Matthew would one day go there. This is a way we can support another in his place.”

They went a step further. The Kelleys established a second endowment called the Joy Rusher and Lois Samuelson Scholarship Endowment. It is in memory of Marie’s mother, Joy Rusher, and her aunt, Lois Samuelson. Lois generously helped fund Marie’s and her brother’s SPU education. Both Joy and Lois were lifelong members of the Free Methodist Church, and they were enthusiastic supporters of medical missionaries. This endowment is dedicated to helping pre-medical school students interested in mission work, particularly students who are in their junior or senior years.

Through both endowments, Ed and Marie are a couple making a difference in students’ lives — and helping change the world — as more young doctors are able to serve in developing regions. They relish receiving personal thank-you notes from students that arrive regularly, and reading stories of exceptional students in Significance. It’s an encouragement in the midst of their busy work lives and adventurous travels.

“Our son Joshua helps us meet people and it gives us quite a different cultural experience,” says Ed, who describes memorable encounters with local people in Islamic countries, all due to Joshua, who was born with Down syndrome. “Because of the teachings about alms giving to the disabled, Joshua attracts attention. He’s been given money, peacock feathers, and a papyrus with the Ten Commandments. We’ve been invited to local people’s homes. It always keeps things interesting.”

The Kelley family is planning another international adventure to Fiji in March 2010. Longer-range plans include possibly retiring in the Northwest, perhaps on Fidalgo or Camano Island near Marie’s brother and closer to the alma mater that helped direct her journey.

Marie wants to ease the financial strain on new doctors so more can apply their skills on the mission field.
Mark Cederborg and his twin sister, Miriam Cederborg Montessoro, led the way to Seattle Pacific University. They were the first in their family of seven children growing up in Oakland, California, during the 1950s to attend SPU. It started a trend. Two younger siblings followed, including sister Ruth Cederborg Gess, who later taught for SPU’s Family and Consumer Sciences program. The number of Cederborg relatives attending Seattle Pacific continues to grow.

Education is a high priority for this family. Four out of the seven children went on to earn law degrees, including Mark, who is a partner and founder of Cederborg & Bret, located in Walnut Creek, California. When he’s not on the move taking care of clients, skiing, or running, Mark helps with the family’s business interests. He generously supports his alma mater as a long-time Fellow. He now serves on the Seattle Pacific Foundation Board of Directors, which provides professional management for SPU’s endowment.

“I was really honored to be invited on this board,” says Mark. “It is made up of very bright and experienced people. It’s a big job. The Foundation is so important for the ongoing financial health of the University.”

Mark expresses his concern that the burden is growing for many families who want to give their children a rigorous Christian education, but who are struggling financially. “We need to provide the opportunity for students to attend SPU who otherwise just couldn’t. This is why a strong endowment is so important,” says Mark, who thinks the University has a distinct purpose and vision. “SPU equips students to get out there and go change the world.”

A Dark Night Brings a Vocation to Light

Aaron Raney
Biology, Class of 2011

“A junior biology major, Aaron grew up far away from well-equipped metropolitan emergency rooms. His parents are missionaries with Mission Aviation Fellowship, and they moved to Borneo when Aaron was a toddler. As a teenager he worked one day a week with a mission doctor, helping local orphans with illnesses such as tuberculosis and malaria. One night the lights went out. “The only light we had was a battery-powered lamp, and a kid came in with a gashed eyebrow,” says Aaron. “The doctor showed me what to do, step-by-step. It was a thrill. Suturing by that battery light in Indonesia helped me learn what God has for me to do with my life.”

Aaron spent his first two years at Seattle Pacific University delving into the integration of faith and academics offered by faculty and peers, earning a 3.97 GPA, and participating in Urban Plunge, SPU’s five-day immersion experience designed to give students a taste of what it is like to be homeless.

“I feel called to help the outcast, the oppressed, and the needy. I’m really open to serving as a doctor in a big city, here or overseas,” says Aaron, who was awarded the Matthew Kelley Medical Scholarship described in the cover story of Significance. It is a scholarship that makes Aaron’s education possible.

“As missionaries, my parents don’t have much money. There is no way I can go to SPU without the financial aid I receive,” says Aaron. “It really comes down to that simple fact, and I’m extremely grateful.”

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Picture a simple lamp pointed toward a bleeding boy in a remote Indonesian orphanage. This is the scene that lit up Aaron Raney — when he decided medicine was for him.

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Endowments: A Never-Ending Source of Support

An endowment is a fund that is invested to generate earnings to provide a stable and continuous source of support for an organization. While the nature of the endowment investments may change, the gifts to an endowment are never spent — only the earnings. In this way, an endowment continues forever and is sometimes called “the gift that keeps on giving.”

The concept of endowments has been around since the Middle Ages, when wealthy landowners in Europe donated property to the church. The church used the income from the property to support its ministries.

The first university endowment in the United States was established at Harvard College in 1649, when an alumnus donated a piece of real estate that had been a cow field. Harvard planted apple trees and used the income from each year’s apple sales to support the college.

You’ve probably heard the quote: “Give a man a fish, feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, feed him for a lifetime.” Similarly, giving a one-time scholarship gift will help a Seattle Pacific student this year, but giving to a scholarship endowment will help students this year, this generation, and beyond.

Gifts of any amount may be contributed to any of SPU’s existing endowment funds. But to start your own named fund takes a commitment of $20,000, payable over five years. It is your choice whether your endowment will support student scholarships or a particular program you care about. The endowment will be named for you, or for anyone you wish to honor or remember. And you will receive annual updates on the status of your fund and how it is making a difference for Seattle Pacific and its students.

For more information, please request a copy of our endowment brochure or ask to speak with a gift officer. Call 206-281-2993 or email spf@spu.edu.

Next Issue

Next Issue of Significance

Do you know that 64 percent of Americans have wills, but only seven percent have named nonprofits as charitable beneficiaries in their wills? In the next issue of Significance, we will explore the topic of wills and bequests. This is a way to transfer stewardship of all God has entrusted to us to the family members, friends, and charities we care for most deeply. We will meet some individuals who are leaving a lasting legacy of love and support for Seattle Pacific University through their charitable bequest plans.

For more information on wills and bequests, or to speak with a gift officer, please call 206-281-2993 or email spf@spu.edu.

The Gift-Planning Team Welcomes Doug Taylor

The gift-planning team at Seattle Pacific University is delighted to welcome Doug Taylor as its newest senior gift officer. Doug joined SPU in 1996 and served as alumni director for 12 years. He previously worked for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and has extensive real estate experience.

Doug earned a bachelor’s degree in business from Seattle Pacific in 1987. He enjoyed serving as a Centurion, peer advisor, and vice president in student government.

A native of Seattle, Doug lives in the Magnolia neighborhood with his wife, Jean, and their three children: Maggie, age 12; Fiona, age 10; and Logan, age 7. In his spare time, Doug enjoys teaching for Bible Study Fellowship.

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