

Alumni Focus



Generosity Creates Opportunities

“...The idea of giving back is really important.”

CHARLES & CHRISTINE MICHAELS

'85 Finance Alumnus and '87 Health Sciences Alumna
Vice President
Goldman Sachs
Private Wealth Management Division

Chuck and Chris Michaels are only beginning to think about the day they'll send their children, 4 and 2, to college. But they have 10 other children attending ASU, thanks to their generosity.

For five years, the couple has awarded scholarships to Phoenix-area high school students. At first they honored their own alma maters, Shadow Mountain High School and Arcadia High School. Now they include applicants from Paradise Valley, Scottsdale and Tempe.

“We wanted to broaden it,” Chris says.

Chuck, a 1985 finance graduate, is vice president of the private wealth management division at Goldman Sachs in San Francisco. Chris earned her degree in health sciences at ASU and worked for several years in the healthcare industry. She now stays home with their children.

Their ties to ASU remain strong. “Chuck and Chris are both longtime supporters of ASU,” says Finance Department Chair Jeffrey Coles. Chuck serves on the board of the Student Investment Management Fund, has earned a distinguished alumni award and recruits graduates on campus for Goldman Sachs.

With their scholarship program, the Michaels are trying to recognize students who might otherwise fall through the cracks. They're not looking to reward those at the top. Such students will be taken care of, Chuck says. What he's looking for is the student “who has shown something else” and may not have been able to attend ASU because of the expense.

One recent recipient is a boy who has muscular dystrophy, one of four sons in his family with the illness. But the young man builds Web sites and also has begun organizing charity golf tournaments.

Another is a girl whose single mother emigrated from Iran speaking little English and supports her family working as a hairdresser. “We look at what they've overcome,” Chuck says.

Each student receives \$2,500 a year, or about half of their tuition costs. The couple also mentors and tutors the students and keeps in touch by e-mail and personal visits.

Chuck and Chris are giving back for the education they received at ASU. Chuck remembers his dedicated finance teachers and learned how solid his training was when he earned his MBA at the University of Chicago alongside students from Columbia, Harvard and Yale.

Today's students are equally prepared, he says. “I think the undergraduate students are outstanding. Pound for pound they're really strong.”

Chuck and Chris Michaels intend to foster lifelong relationships with the students they're assisting with scholarships, instill a positive outlook and teach them to in turn help others.

“It's our hope to watch them graduate and realize how lucky they are even though they've had some difficult challenges,” Chuck says, “and that the idea of giving back is really important.”