

An Uplifting Gift

BY MONIQUE JOHNSON



Marissa McGee, '08, MA '09, hopes to land a teaching job in the Washington, D.C., public school system when she completes her master's degree through the Stanford Teacher Education Program. As an undergraduate, she was the first recipient of a Karr Family Scholarship. PHOTO: Courtesy of M. McGee

year on campus. Last year, as she completed her undergraduate studies and prepared to enter STEP, she became the first to benefit from the Karr Family Scholarship Fund.

"I am so grateful," she says, "especially when I take into account the salary I expect to earn as a teacher. Not having to worry about paying back loans takes a load off my shoulders."

Given the intense demands of STEP, stress relief is important. In addition to a full complement of courses, McGee devotes half of each week to building hands-on teaching experience alongside a veteran teacher-mentor. During the fall semester, she worked in a combined second- and third-grade classroom at East Palo Alto Academy, a charter school operated by Stanford. She later shifted to a sixth-grade classroom down the road at her alma mater, Eastside College Preparatory School.

The smiles and successes of the kids keep her going, and helping them learn gives her life meaning, she explains. McGee envisions a long career in urban classrooms where students need the most help.

"There is a ripple effect to teaching," she says. "If I help 20 students, they will go out into the world, and there is no telling how many people they will influence. It's a great feeling."

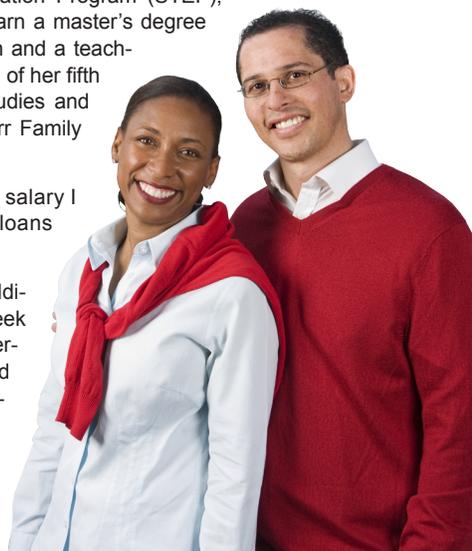
That exponential effect sounds very much like what the Karrs had hoped to trigger. ■

Tonia Gladney Karr, '92, and Marissa McGee, '08, MA '09, each dreamed of coming to Stanford, one from Louisiana and the other from Union City, California. Each turned vision into reality with a lot of hard work and a generous scholarship offer from the university. Although they have yet to meet, the two women share a bond as sisters in Alpha Kappa Alpha and, through the sorority, served as mentors to youth in the East Palo Alto community. They are also both the daughters of teachers.

Today, Karr serves on the advisory council for Stanford's K-12 Initiative, a multidisciplinary effort to break new ground on some of the most important problems in public education. She and her husband, Adam, who also relied on financial aid to attend college, recently established a scholarship fund to help financially needy Stanford undergraduates—with a preference for African-American students, particularly those who aspire to become teachers. Their gift was shaped by twin objectives: opening up for others the educational opportunities they enjoyed and encouraging talented young students to work in inner-city schools, where they can inspire generations of dreamers. One-to-one matching funds double the impact of their support.

"Those who teach lift everyone up," says Tonia Gladney Karr. "Giving the scholarship to someone who will help someone else is the best way to support education broadly."

McGee always knew she wanted to work with kids and settled on becoming a teacher in her first two years at Stanford. In her junior year, she was accepted into the School of Education's Stanford Teacher Education Program (STEP), which enables her to earn a master's degree in elementary education and a teaching credential at the end of her fifth



Tonia Gladney Karr, '92, and Adam Karr's gift to establish an undergraduate scholarship fund helps the university reach a \$200 million goal for new endowed scholarships and meet its bold commitment to need-blind admission. PHOTO: Saul Bromberger and Sandra Hoover