Educate a Woman and You Educate a Family
The Linly Heflin Newsletter
Focus on our Scholars

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Carol moved to Birmingham in 1980, where she began her career practicing law for Liberty National Life Insurance Company and Torchmark Corporation. In her more than 30 years as an in-house counsel with Torchmark, Carol has worked in a variety of areas of corporate law, including mergers and acquisitions, securities, investments, stock-based employee benefits, executive compensation, stock exchange listing, and insurance regulatory work. Carol currently wears three "corporate hats" at Torchmark where she serves as Vice President, Associate Counsel and Corporate Secretary. In her role as Corporate Secretary, she works with the Boards of Directors of Torchmark and its subsidiaries and their various committees where she is responsible for all areas of corporate governance. She also enjoys being able to give back to Torchmark through her involvement with Torchmark’s corporate contributions committee, as well as through her personal contributions to the Linly Heflin Former Scholars Scholarship Fund.

In 1994, upon the 75th anniversary of the Linly Heflin Unit, Carol worked with other former scholarship recipients, Linly Heflin mentees and local educators, to develop a mentoring program. This program partnered former scholar recipients with students in the community, providing guidance and support to help them navigate their academic journey.

In the small Colbert County town of Leighton, Alabama, college degrees were a rarity in the 1970s. For a young person like Carol, it was a dream to go to college, and as a very bright and motivated teenager, Carol had her sights set on Vanderbilt University. Carol is the eldest of four children, and her parents were saving money to send them to college, when, tragically, Carol’s father died. Carol was 16 and her siblings were 13, 10 and 8 years old. This abrupt change in circumstances sent Carol’s mother back to work teaching in the Colbert County schools, where over the course of a career totaling 27 years she would teach in almost every grade from 1st through 12th. College was still of the highest priority in this family. However, Carol’s goals had to adapt to the new reality of a widow sending four children to college on a high school teacher’s salary.

Carol turned her attention to the University of Alabama where her father had earned his degrees. She received a pastry Alumni Honors Scholarship to UA, but she knew that the more scholarship money she could secure, the more dollars toward college she could acquire. Carol narrowly missed being selected at first, but Carol’s persistence and tenacity led to the Linly Heflin scholarship being offered to her. Carol worked with other former scholarship recipients, Linly Heflin mentees and local educators, to develop a mentoring program. This program partnered former scholar recipients with students in the community, providing guidance and support to help them navigate their academic journey.

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Carole Borowski
Professor, volunteer, military wife and mother

Carole Borowski, a 1989 graduate of Auburn University, tells us that there are two groups of people that she can thank for her education. First and foremost is her family. Although neither of her parents attended college, they shared a fervent belief that a college education was an essential ingredient toward success in life. They raised their two daughters to believe that not graduating from college was out of the question. Their mother, who worked a number of part time jobs when the girls were young, always made time for educational experiences such as regular trips to the library and the Birmingham Museum of Art. Unfortunately, the family’s finances suffered a reversal when her father lost a business. Instead of declaring bankruptcy, he made the admirable decision to repay all that he owed. For the next ten years, Carole watched her father work two and even three jobs at a time to fulfill his obligations. Carole’s mother took a job with the Jefferson County Tax Assessor’s office, where she worked for fifteen years. During her high school years Carole helped the family’s finances by babysitting and working in a clothing store. She also found time to study hard and to participate in various school activities.

“If without the scholarship, I don’t think I would have ever graduated, even with part-time jobs and help from home. Saying ‘I’m grateful’ to the Linly Heflin organization doesn’t seem adequate to express how I feel.”

Len and Carole

Len in Iraq beside his F-16 fighter jet

If it had not been for his dental appointment, Len could easily have been one of the pilots on the hijacked plane on 9/11. After a time of soul searching, Len and Carole decided that the best course for him would be to return to active duty. 2001 completely altered their plans. Len’s flight assignments regularly took him to New York City, and in fact, he was there the day before the terrorist attack. He happened to have a scheduled dental appointment in Dallas on September 11, so was in Dallas when the planes hit the World Trade Center. One of the hijacked jets that flew into the twin towers was an American Airlines plane. Len realized that if it had not been for his dental appointment, he could easily have been one of the pilots on the plane. After a time of soul searching, Len and Carole decided that the best course for him would be to return to active duty. They moved to Prattville, Alabama, where Len has been stationed at Maxwell Air Force Base ever since. He has been deployed to the Middle East eight times. He piloted his F-16 Fighter-Bomber Jet the first night of the war with Iraq, and has also led bombing missions over Afghanistan, among other duties. He has achieved the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, and at present is responsible for training future Air Force pilots.

Len has been deployed to the Middle East eight times.

Len, Caro, Carole and Luke in Wyoming

Carole stays busy in her multiple roles as wife, mother of two active teenagers, college professor, and community volunteer. Carole teaches English Literature and composition at both Faulkner College and Troy University. She also serves as mission director of the Women’s Ministry at Prattville First Baptist Church. Luke, their son, will be a high school senior this fall. She loves math and science, along with sports and the arts, and is interested in doing research in the future. Both Luke and Cara, following their parents’ example of striving for excellence, are straight-A students. When we asked Carole to express what the Linly Heflin scholarship meant to her, she replied with the following story:

“Once a man was walking on a beach after a storm. The sand seemed covered with starfish; as far as the eye could see the creatures were ‘beached’—unable to get back into the life-sustaining water. As he walked, he noticed a young boy flinging the starfish, one by one, back into the ocean. He asked the boy: ‘Why are you even trying? It’s useless!’ The boy, looking up at the man, replied, ‘I made a difference to that one, he whispered.’ After a few seconds, there were two people at work making a difference on the beach.’

Carole compares herself to one of the ‘starfish who was saved’. Getting the Linly Heflin scholarship helped her to achieve a tremendously satisfying life and career that probably would have been impossible otherwise. To quote her again: ‘The Linly Heflin’s motto is: ‘Educate a Woman and You Educate a Family’. For me, it goes even further. My degree has enabled me to help educate a woman, and help from home. Saying ‘I’m grateful’ to the Linly Heflin organization doesn’t seem adequate to express how I feel.”

Luke and Cara

In Ketalaju, Guatemala on a missions trip

Carole Borowski, military wife and mother
Tracy Parks

Physician, wife, mother & volunteer

Dr. Tracy Parks M.D., a physician with the Jefferson County Department of Health, tells us that she is the first person in her family to earn a college degree. She is evidently a person of unusual ability and perseverance, for she did not receive a great deal of help in her quest for an education. When Tracy was two years old, her parents went to the hospital. She divorced. Since her mother had little formal education or training, she struggled to support her two young daughters with a series of low-paying jobs. She remarried when Tracy was four, and had another daughter and a son by her second husband. For the next several years, their financial positions were quite strained. At an early age Tracy learned to do without many of the privileges that her classmates enjoyed. She especially remembers having a deep desire to play in the Jr. High School band, but her mother sadly told her that the money was simply not available for the required fees. Although Tracy's mother was able to assist her children with a lot of material benefits, they instilled in them a deep desire to be successful. Always an excellent student, Tracy was taken into the Honor society, and she was also a staff member of the school newspaper. However, much of her time during high school years was spent working at various part-time jobs in order to pay for her personal expenses.

During her senior year in high school, Tracy realized that she must have financial help in order to fulfill her ambition of going to college. After exploring various possibilities, she was given a full tuition scholarship to the University of Montevallo. She still needed funds for her room and board. Thankfully, this was provided for her by the Linly Heflin scholarship. She tells us that getting the Linly Heflin scholarship provided her with an invaluable opportunity I might not otherwise have had. "The Linly Heflin, in turn, is grateful to Tracy for sharing her inspiring story with us.

Scott, Tracy and Rachel at the beach a few weeks ago

Tracy's clinic provides a safety net for an under-served segment of the population.

Tracy's clinic is a health care clinic located in the Montevallo area. It is a clinic that provides primary care to the uninsured and underinsured populations. The clinic is staffed by a team of physicians, nurses, and medical assistants. The clinic is located in a building that was formerly a church, and the community has a strong sense of history and tradition.

Scott and Tracy flying over the Grand Canyon

Tracy's residency was challenging. In the role of a single parent, her residency required Tracy to be at the hospital eighty or more hours a week. Because of Carraway's day care program, Tracy was able to leave her 8-month-old baby Rachel with her work. She also played in the band—which was particularly pleasing to Tracy, who had yearned to join her Jr. High School band so many years before. Rachel just completed her first year at the University of Alabama. The tragic tornadoes of April 27th were a time of extreme anxiety and tension for her family. As with other University students, Rachel and her dormmates were ordered to stay in the basement of their building that afternoon. For several hours, Tracy was unable to contact her daughter by cell phone. However, she found that her text messages were getting through, and she relayed to her the progress of the storms, as they were being reported on the TV. For a while, it appeared that a funnel was headed directly for Rachel's dorm. Thankfully, at the last minute it veered and hit other areas. At that time, all cell phone and even text-messaging service went out. It was not until the following morning that Tracy was finally able to reach Rachel, and learn that she was well. The event was a harrowing one for Rachel. She had considered going to work at her part-time job at the University Mall the day of the storm but had decided against it. Many stores in the area were badly damaged, and had Rachel not been safely sequestered in her dorm, she could well have been numbered among those injured that day.

As noted earlier, Tracy was the first person in her family to earn a college degree. However, she was not the last. While working at UAB, Tracy's mother attended classes, and earned a degree there in her fifties. Both of Tracy's sisters are college graduates. One of the most significant accomplishments of the family was the education of their daughter, Rachel. She had considered going to work at her part-time job at the University Mall the day of the storm but had decided against it. Many stores in the area were badly damaged, and had Rachel not been safely sequestered in her dorm, she could well have been numbered among those injured that day.
Janece Maze
Future Lawyer Tornado Survivor

Janece Maze, a second-year student at the University of Alabama Law School, impresses one as a person with boundless energy, ambition, and determination. While she was still in grade school she decided that she wanted to become a lawyer and be able to help people. During her high school years at Dallas County High in Plantville, Alabama, she worked extremely hard to maintain her high scholastic standards. She was consistently ranked in the top 10% of her class, and maintained a 3.8% GPA. At the same time, she was involved in many extra-curricular activities such as the Science Club, the Drama Club, FBLA, DECA Business Association (for which she won a regional and state title for Environmental Science Outstanding Southeastern Scholar Award). In the spring of 2009, she was elected to the National Honor Society, and was the co-coordinator of the Black Law Students Association. She volunteers with the Public Interest Law Firm and is a member of the law week committee of the Student Bar Association. She was elected for a Linly Heflin Scholarship. She was overjoyed when she learned that her application had been granted, and that she would be able to pursue the education of her dreams.

While she was still in grade school she decided that she wanted to become a lawyer and help people in need. She was accepted to the National Honor Society in her senior year, and graduated with top honors in 2005. College was the next stepping-stone toward Janece's education. Of her class, only 15% of the students were black, and Janece was the top student at Song Eye Center, where she served as a receptionist. She was elected to the National Honor Society, and was the student government association coordinator of the Black Law Students Association. She tells us that the academic schedule at the University has been quite demanding, yet at the same time tremendously rewarding. She has somehow found time to become involved in a number of meaningful activities.

In her application for a Linly Heflin Scholarship, Janece had not left her apartment she might have lost her life. If Janece had not left her apartment she might well have been injured, and all of her belongings had been completely destroyed. Janece found that her apartment building, her car, and all of her belongings had been completely destroyed.

Janece planned to work extremely hard to pay for college. Janece took refuge in the restroom just before the storm struck. Thankfully, the building they were in didn't buckle under the pressure of the tornado, but the ceiling did fall, and most of the buildings across the street were destroyed. Janece and her friends were thankful to have escaped injury, however they were shocked and dismayed by the destruction all around them. Despite the chaos in the city, Janece was unable to return to her apartment that night. When she arrived there the next day, she was horrified to discover a scene of total devastation. Her apartment building, her car, and all of her belongings had been completely destroyed. Even more tragically, four of her neighbors in the building had been killed by the storm. She realized that if she had not left her apartment that afternoon she well have been numbered among the other casualties.

Janece and Janeka viewing the remains of her apartment.

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If Janece had not left her apartment she might have lost her life.

photos courtesy of Janeca Maze and Versie Maze-Ike

continued on next page
It has not been easy putting her life back together after losing virtually everything she owned. The weeks and months following the storm have been difficult ones for Janece, as they have been for thousands of other victims all over Alabama. It has not been easy putting her life back together after having lost virtually everything that she owned. As a person of deep faith, Janece is thankful to God for protecting her and her friends. She knows that it is a blessing to be alive after such devastation. As horrible as her experience has been, it has made her realize that material things are replaceable, while life is not. She remains committed to her faith in God, her family, and community service. Never one to complain, Janece remains focused on making her career goals a reality. The summer months were spent working for her former employer, Checksmart Financial LLC and finding a new apartment in Tuscaloosa that she could share with her sister, Janeka. Just replacing necessities that had been lost in the storm took a considerable amount of time and effort.

Now enrolled in her second year at the University School of Law, Janece is looking forward to graduating with her Juris Doctor degree in the spring of 2013. Her ultimate goal is to practice environmental law and to devote her time to community based efforts to assist people in need. And with Janece’s proven abilities, work ethic, and determination, who could doubt that her future is indeed bright, and that she will succeed in all of her endeavors?
Miami-based designer Rene Ruiz will present his Spring 2012 Collection at the 53rd Annual Linly Heflin Scholarship Luncheon and Fashion Show at the Sheraton Birmingham Hotel Ballroom on Wednesday, September 28, 2011. Co-chairs Patti Badham and Kay Grisham and their hard-working committee members are coordinating with Gus Mayer to present an exciting show.

Cuban-born Ruiz immigrated to the United States in his late teens to study nuclear engineering and architecture. Once settled in Miami, he realized he needed to follow his heart, opting to construct clothing rather than buildings. He earned a degree from the International Fine Arts College in Miami. He honed his skills during apprenticeships throughout Europe. After opening his first atelier in Coral Gables in the 90’s, Ruiz quickly became the go-to designer for celebrities and socialites. His eye for high-quality fabrics and personalized attention to the creation and tailoring of each garment has created an international following for his luxurious, original and sophisticated designs. Ruiz’s designs fill a void in the luxury market with a collection that reflects not only his talent and standards for quality but also a city and culture that are gaining momentum as the next international fashion capital. Ruiz is also known for creating his own fabrics to accentuate the meticulous detailing which inspires sensuality for the modern woman.

Fashion Show producer Megan LaRussa is planning a new and exciting show sure to please a full house. Amie Beth Shaver, Miss Alabama 1994, will serve as emcee for the event. Linly Heflin wishes to express our deep appreciation to Jeff Pizitz and the Gus Mayer staff for once again making it all possible.

*Due to space constraints, we are unable to list all corporate donors in the Newsletter. A full list including all levels of giving is available in the “Look Book.”