

# Making an Impact

## Giving is All in the Family

### Tips for teaching children to give:

- Designate part of their allowance for “sharing” with a charity.
- Volunteer together as a family.
- Give a “share check” as a gift. Specify the dollar amount but leave “pay to the order of” blank, so the child can choose the recipient.
- Model good financial behavior.

For more tips go to  
[www.sharesavespend.com](http://www.sharesavespend.com)

By Lisa Harden

Giving is all in the family for Kris Gabel '92, her husband, Greg Nelson, and three stepchildren.

Last year, the Nelson/Gabel family established a scholarship at William Mitchell for women who are interested in careers as corporate attorneys. “I received a scholarship to Mitchell and it helped me, so I wanted to make a difference for someone else,” says Kris, who is the associate general counsel at Merrill Corporation in St. Paul.

Nathan Dungan, a financial expert from the Twin Cities who founded **Share Save Spend**, a national organization to help youth and adults develop healthy financial habits, says the Nelson/Gabel’s modeling approach is great way to teach kids about giving.

“Families that practice experiential philanthropy create a sense of awareness that helps young people develop an attitude of compassion,” Dungan says. He suggests that families find a cause children can “share” part of their allowance with, such as a food shelf, and then take them to visit the organization so they can see where their money is going.

Kris brought her youngest stepdaughter along when she gave boardwalk tours at Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary in Naples, Florida. “April loved nature, so it was a great opportunity for me to bond with her and teach her that you can really make a difference in society by showing that you care,” Kris says.

Greg and his oldest daughter, Amanda, helped build Habitat for Humanity homes in Immokalee, Florida. “It was good bonding time that also made us both feel good inside,” he remembers.

Greg’s sister formed and runs Everyday Miracles, a nonprofit organization that provides doula services (similar to midwives) to high-risk mothers, so Kris’ stepchildren often pay for their own tickets to Everyday Miracle’s fundraising events.

Kris and Greg were named 2007 Volunteers of the Year for the Florida Audubon Society for their work at Corkscrew Swamp. They also volunteer at SCORE, a nonprofit organization partially funded by the Small Business Association that provides business counseling to small and emerging businesses.

Parents can begin teaching their children about giving as soon as they say “I want” something. “The earlier you start, the easier it will be to make them understand the difference between wants and needs,” Dungan says. “When your children are 25 to 30, what kind of financial skills do you want them to have?”

The Nelson/Gabel children, now grown, continue to give to charitable organizations and volunteer. “Teaching kids to give back is a value that lasts a lifetime,” Kris says. 🌱

