

# What will you leave your children?

*Editor's note: Vero Beach residents Randy and Karen Baker — newly arrived from Atherton, California — last week donated \$250,000 to Hibiscus Children's Center in Jensen Beach to aid in the construction of Hibiscus' planned Vero Beach expansion. Married 29 years, the Bakers are early retirees — he from a career at IBM, Tandem/Compaq and Oracle Software; she from a career first as a special education speech and hearing therapist, then as a corporate meeting planner.*

*In the piece below, Karen Baker describes the couple's commitment to their generous community gift and the philosophy behind it. "I'm hoping I can inspire others in a similar position to invest in future generations," she told Scripps Treasure Coast Newspapers.*

*In California Karen Baker served on the board of a mental health agency. And she is still a board member for a child abuse prevention center based in Atherton.*

## RANDY AND KAREN BAKER

Special to the News

pects of this that were relevant 100 years ago and will be relevant 100 years from now. We are talking about integrity, honesty, giving of yourself, being kind, owning a work ethic, knowing what you stand for and trying to answer the question of what thumbprint you will leave on the world. Quite simply, we want our children to believe and feel that they were always loved and that all our actions were carried out with love as our guide.

Additionally, it is important that they know we believe in sharing with those unable to provide for themselves. This kind of giving can be difficult. The actual act of giving is easy but the decision as to where to give takes what we call "research." This "research" is not limited to just perusing an agency's spreadsheet and reviewing an agency's history. Perhaps the real research is when you look at yourself and decide what kind of giving will nourish your heart and soul. For people who have given, it is so clear that the giver is, in reality, the recipient.

I question whether philanthropy is as selfless an act as it would appear at first glance. We have chosen to give to others and in so doing we have given yet something else to our children and ourselves now. The beauty of this is that it is not like an item that is used, wears out and is thrown away. It is a gift of infinite value.

Through our research, we have chosen to support those with severe mental illness and children who need food, shelter, and someone who truly sees them when they are in a room. There are many children who are emotionally disadvantaged. We came to a decision to support Hibiscus Children's Center in Jensen Beach.

We are residents of Vero Beach. Hibiscus broke ground recently in Vero Beach and will have real homes for the children when it is

complete. There will be a total of eight homes for the children and a building for administrative-type agency work. We recently went on a tour of the center in Jensen Beach (the last step for us prior to making our decision to fund a home) and for the size of the facility, we have nothing but praise for the efficiency of that "operation." It signifies what can be done through clear thinking and innovation in spite of space available.

We talked with a young girl and she, along with a staff member, gave us the tour. It is incredible to see the difference between this girl and what we may generalize as a girl from a middle class nuclear family. She pointed out that if their behavior warrants it (not her words), they receive a dollar. Take a moment to think about your children. Would they have this expression of excitement (as this child did) on their faces if they were given a dollar? We can tell you (and not proudly) that our kids would expect a lot more than one dollar!

Once we had made the decision to do this and actually made the verbal commitment, it was a day we will remember for a very long time. Some feelings cannot be described with words on a page. What you will need to do is give this "giving thing" a try. Only when you have made this choice will you experience a new feeling.

And it is perfectly acceptable and admirable to provide your children and family with the things they want. We are asking you to expand that generosity and leave your children, through example, with the best you have to offer, giving a child a place to be, a home with love, a night of sleep free of chaos, nourishing food and an environment for optimal growth free of fear. Your children and your future generations will be proud to say, "My mom and dad made that happen!"

What have your children learned? What will they leave to their children?

**A**s parents of young adult children, we have asked ourselves and had several discussions about what we have given to our children and what will we be leaving to them. Frequently and quite naturally, we itemize things we have provided, education we have provided, vacations we have shared. Some or all of these are important components of parenting. We doubt anyone would deny the fact that, for example, a good education is something that a parent should be proud of providing.

However, as we delved deeper into the conversation of what we have given and what we will leave, some other thoughts took priority. We actually posed another question to ourselves — i.e., what do we want our children to say about us now and when we are gone? Additionally, what are we teaching them? These are the questions we want to answer here.

We want them to know that we had a "value system" for our lives. Their value system may not look the same, but there are some as-