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# All in the family

## Laura Turner Seydel and the mantle of philanthropy

By Jennifer Taylor

**L**aura Turner Seydel is a busy woman. In addition to being a wife and mother, she is a full-time philanthropist and environmentalist.

She serves as chair of the Captain Planet Foundation, a co-founder of Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper Fund, and co-founder of Mothers & Others for Clean Air.

Add to that a seat on numerous boards including Earth Share Georgia, The Nature Conservancy of Georgia, the North Georgia Water Planning District Board, Defenders of Wildlife, and Waterkeeper Alliance. She is also a board member of the Atlanta Ballet, Oglethorpe University and The League of Conservation Voters Education Fund.

She says her inspiration for leading a philanthropic life stems from her family. As a child, she heard stories from her paternal grandmother about the Great Depression. The family was in the hotel business, and operated a soup kitchen in the back of the hotel. Giving back to others was also passed along by her father, Ted Turner, who urged his family to be environmentally conscious.

He formed the Turner Foundation in 1990, a private family environmental grantmaking foundation, and involved his children in "making decisions, and where to put the money where it would work." Laura says, "Over time and through CNN watching documentaries," she began to "care about our home and place, and people and animals," which is "the driving force behind charity and philanthropy."

When asked why she gives, Laura says, "it becomes an ethic and becomes ingrained as the right thing to do, and feels good. In my opinion, it's the responsible thing to do." She thinks of her family as she strives to protect the environment through her work, and says, "My kids are my main motivating factor. On my deathbed, I'll be able to say I did everything in my power. Maybe mankind will have become mindful of how it treats the planet, and the beauty, and we'll learn to take care of it and pass it down."

She is impressed by the philanthropic ethic in Atlanta, which is one reason "why we have so many nonprofits here. I think the corporations here are extremely generous, and so are the people." With that in mind, these are some of her suggestions how business people can get involved in the community:

Employees can get involved in workplace giving campaigns with organizations such as Earth Share of Georgia. There are currently more than seventy businesses that have partnered with the organization.

There are nonprofit boards for business people to sit on, and get involved in the philanthropic community.

Hands on Atlanta is another great way to get involved. Not everyone can write a check, but business people can volunteer.

Turner Seydel has devoted the past twenty years to philanthropy, and that will continue to be her focus. "This is my full time job, giving back. I'm able to treat this seriously and be involved with so many organizations. It feels right, and we're making good progress." **AB**