

Abby Williams credits her mother with her drive to help others

By Robert Miller

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Published 01 August 2011 10:29 PM

Abby Williams didn't have to look far to find inspiration.

Her mom was a single mother who worked as many as three jobs to support her, her brother and sister as they grew up in small-town Texas.

Her mother, **Mary Louise Ludt**, focused on ensuring that her children had a better life than she had. Young Abby Sassenhagen honored that message by coming to **Southern Methodist University** on a full scholarship, then joining **Goldman Sachs**, where she rose to vice president and director of charitable services before retiring.

Williams has given \$1 million to establish the Abigail Williams Donor Advised Fund at the **Dallas Women's Foundation**, which will make gifts to improve the lives of women and their children, enabling others to transcend challenges like the ones her family experienced.

"Like Dallas Women's Foundation, I believe you can't educate children if their mother is battered, hungry, uneducated or unemployed. If she is thriving and excelling, her children are more likely to thrive and excel, too," Williams said.

With her gift, Williams has been welcomed as a member of the international Women Moving Millions campaign founded by **Helen** and **Swanee Hunt** to encourage women of means to give gifts of \$1 million or more to women's foundations.

"Abby is a visionary education reform advocate doing significant work to ensure superior educational experiences for children while also furthering opportunities for women," said **Roslyn Dawson Thompson**, president and CEO of Dallas Women's Foundation.

Williams and her husband, **Todd**, dedicated their time and energy to improving the quality of public education in Dallas.

She is co-chair of the Dallas-Fort Worth regional board of **Teach for America** and a board member of **Williams Preparatory**, a kindergarten through 12th grade school in Dallas that she and Todd, a retired managing director of the Dallas division of Goldman Sachs, helped fund when it was created in 2007.

Through the couple's family foundation, she helps oversee the Starfish Scholarship program, which has helped more than 50 underserved high school graduates get a college education.

"Being involved in Dallas Women's Foundation has provided me with a network of like-minded women and a resource to deepen my knowledge of philanthropy by and for women," Williams said.

She has held leadership roles on the Dallas Women's Foundation board that include chairing its 25th Anniversary Celebration Luncheon in 2010. She is also active in chairing the annual Global Outreach Speaker Series and Awards at **Austin College** in **Sherman** (Todd's alma mater).

For more information about Dallas Women's Foundation, visit www.dallaswomensfoundation.org or call **Lesly Bosch Annen** at 214-965-9977, ext. 118.