

BRINGING THE KIDS ALONG

In 2007, Carol Harris established a donor-advised fund with The Pittsburgh Foundation in hopes of involving her family. Recently, Carol gathered her six grandchildren — Pete, Peter, Mark, Shane, Jacek and Caroline — to discuss philanthropy, life lessons and the importance of giving back. The children took turns asking their grandmother questions.

By Ryan Rydzewski



**What was your
childhood like?**

It was great. I grew up in Penn Hills, and we had a house with lots of woods out back. My brothers and I spent a lot of time swimming, hiking and camping.

My mother had a great sense of humor and worked hard around the house. Pap Pap was a steelworker who worked long hours. They were both wonderful to be around, though Pap Pap was very strict. Back then, I didn't always appreciate it, but it certainly taught me a lot of good life lessons. If I'd have been out on my own, just doing whatever I wanted whenever I felt like it, I probably wouldn't be the person I am today. And your parents probably wouldn't be the same, either, because I think I was a little stricter with them because of it.

**What did
you want to
be when you
grew up?**

Well, I really wanted to be a psychiatrist. [Laughs] It didn't turn out that way, but I'm pretty happy with what I chose instead.



What do you do for a living?

I'm the CEO of Carol Harris Staffing. I've had my own company for 28 years. Before that, I worked for another staffing company, called Kelly Services. I started out part-time at the front desk, then moved into full-time staffing. Later, I became a branch manager and eventually the company chairperson for the Pittsburgh area, where I ran eight offices.

I'd learned everything from the bottom up, and felt confident enough to start my own service. The hardest part was building the company while supporting two kids on my own. But I had faith — I knew it was something that I could do. And it took off. It's been a great ride.

Didn't you do real estate, too?

I did! I was a broker and sold real estate. That was a lot of fun.

Would you say you liked it better than staffing?

No, staffing is my passion. It's my life.

What if you were offered a million-dollar listing in Boston and a reality TV show? Would you stay in staffing?

[Laughs] I'd stay in staffing.

You must like staffing.

[Laughs] I certainly do.

How do you define "success"?

It comes in all forms. I have great kids. They have great spouses and six wonderful children and you all make me feel very successful. As far as business goes, I think [Carol Harris Staffing] is successful because of the high level of service we provide.

What drives you to give back to the community?

We've been very fortunate, both in family and in business. There are so many people out there who haven't had the same opportunities that we've had, and it's very, very important to recognize that and to give back. I know that all six of you have done a great job with that.

Why did you start the Carol Harris Family Fund?

I started it because I really wanted my kids and grandkids to be involved in charitable work. I wanted you involved because I think that if you learn from a young age that it's important to give back, then throughout your lives you'll start to really understand how to impact the issues you care about.

Those issues may change from year to year — maybe it's childhood cancer research now and something to do with animals later. But the important thing is that you're interested and involved.

What charity is the most important to you?

I've been on the board of Habitat for Humanity for over 20 years — that's a very important one to me. But right now, I'd really like to see you finding your own passions and making decisions together about how to use the fund.

How do you want to be remembered?

As a good mother. A good grandmother. Loving, kind, passionate, enthusiastic and very giving.

Are you proud of us?

I'm so, so proud of you. You're all really good kids. It makes me so happy to see your strong work ethic and good sense of humor. You're kind, you're loving and you know how to have fun. And hopefully through The Pittsburgh Foundation, we'll keep giving back together.



Carol Harris and her grandchildren. Clockwise from top left: Peter Morgan Habib III, Pete O'Connor Jr., Mark Prucnal Jr., Caroline Paris O'Connor, Jacek Prucnal and Shane Prucnal