

## RELATIONSHIPS/mentors

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NEW YORK -- Duncan Campbell, relaxed in khaki pants, blue sweater and comfortable shoes in the lobby of a plush Park Avenue hotel, looked like a tourist out to see the sights. But the Portland entrepreneur, in town for only one whirlwind day on this early May visit, was a man on a mission.

Over the years, Campbell, now 57, has built a powerhouse of a company. And yet his true passion, what he believed was his calling in life, came from a promise he made to himself decades ago when he was a frightened little boy with an alcoholic mother and father. He raised himself, he says, often tracking his parents to some local bar to tell them there was nothing to eat in the house.

He made it out of the neighborhood, broke free of his parents and founded The Campbell Group, which now manages more than \$1 billion in timberland investments.

Along the way, he founded Friends of the Children, a unique mentoring program designed to save Portland kids growing up in similar situations. It's been hugely successful, and now has offshoots in eight cities nationwide. Social service experts believe it has the potential to become one of the country's most effective programs for intervening in the lives of at-risk children. It has attracted millions of dollars in grants, serves more than 600 kids across the country, has its own national board and -- for the past 18 months -- has been headed by Catherine Milton, one of the country's best-connected social visionaries.

Campbell rose from one of the lobby's leather chairs and greeted Milton, who he hopes will take Friends to a truly national level. Milton has the resume for it: She's been special assistant to the president of Stanford University; founder of Stanford's prestigious Haas Center for Public Service; head of AmeriCorps, the domestic Peace Corps; and executive director of Save the Children's U.S. programs.

Campbell and Milton walked to a nearby coffee shop, raising their voices so they could hear themselves. Cabs whizzed along Park Avenue, their drivers impatiently honking at the slightest delay. The pair talked strategy. The coming day in New York would be an important step in Friends of the Children's rise to national prominence.

At this stage of life, Campbell knows a good heart and a desire to help children aren't enough. The skeptical guardians of foundation checkbooks look at programs with the cold eyes of investment bankers. The federal government, inundated with pleas for help, wants not just good intentions, but proof that programs work.

### Full-time friends

When Duncan Campbell started Friends of the Children, he had a simple plan. He hired full-time employees to serve as the adult friends of at-risk children, surrogate aunts and uncles who would help shape the children's lives. He was convinced that such kids needed help before they were sucked into the juvenile-justice system, and he focused on children with parents in prison or on welfare.

While most social workers had caseloads of up to 100, Campbell provided a good salary and benefits to each of his mentors for overseeing just eight children. Each "Friend" would enter the child's life in the first grade and be a part of it through high school. The first participating children graduate this spring.

And now, Campbell has turned to Milton to help make Friends stronger. The program received a \$1.5 million grant from the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation shortly after Milton signed on. The grant was a vote of confidence.

"We don't solicit applications," says Bruce Trachtenberg, the foundation's director of communications. "We look for high-performing and promising organizations that over time will be able to expand their services to more kids. We try to figure out how we can help that organization get to that stage."

The foundation teamed the Friends' program up with a consultant to devise a business plan. The grant paid for the planning and helped build a national structure to oversee Friends programs that had sprung up in other cities.

About \$500,000 of the grant will seed a \$6 million study aimed at seeing if the Friends program really works.

"The biggest stumbling block, the biggest weakness," Catherine Milton says, "is that it's expensive. It costs an average of \$8,000 to work with one child for a year. You could reach a child in the classroom for about the same money. So is it worth the investment? I believe it works. You can reach the tough kids at an early age in a way you can't later on."

Some Boston venture capitalists, Campbell says, decided to start a program to help local kids. They examined 100 programs, narrowed their list to four and finally selected Friends, which will begin in Boston sometime next year.

"These people want real outcomes," Campbell says. "I speak their language. A lot of programs get up and running and fail by the third year. We're in this for the long haul."

### **Looking down the road**

The long haul is what brought Campbell and Milton to New York. A spring storm -- complete with the thunder and lightning uncommon in Portland -- had kept Campbell up most of the night. As they walked to a lawyer's office to meet with the board of the New York City Friends chapter, they talked about the pros and cons of having a program with roots tracing back to a relatively small town like Portland.

"Being in Portland allowed the idea to bubble up from the grass roots," Milton said. "But the people who need to invest are on the East Coast."

She pointed across the street, to the law office where the morning meeting would be held. Limousines, their drivers standing by the passenger doors, dotted the blocks. That's where the money was, and Campbell and Milton were coming to the money.

"Three foundations are in walking distance of that building," she said. "We know we're in the running for a very big grant, but you can't apply. You just get interviewed and answer all the questions. It's a matter of a track record, a belief in the organization and luck."

Campbell and Milton expected a tense board meeting. For years, each local Friends program has operated independently. The Portland organization served as the mother chapter, but no strong national board supervised operations in other cities. The program's effectiveness varied from city to city.

Now, however, Milton will direct a national Friends organization -- based in Portland -- that will oversee all operations. All Friends will come to Portland for training, and each chapter will follow protocol and standards designed by the Portland-based national board.

And that's what Milton and Campbell had come to tell the New Yorkers.

Milton sat at the head of the table and ran the meeting. "We're a year into our business plan," she said, "and we need to make changes to operate as one company so we're all working together. We're going to have a national board made up of people with connections. Part of their goal will be to help with raising money. We're also hiring someone to work with getting grants and lobbying for us in D.C. for money."

The Washington, D.C., chapter, she said, was no longer part of Friends because its leadership refused to be evaluated. She said the group can take the core ideas but can no longer use the Friends name.

Howard Clyman, director of the New York chapter, wanted to make sure the national board didn't dictate exactly how each chapter operated. He said the New York chapter, based in west Harlem, faced unique challenges.

The chapter has seven friends who work with 56 children. Although they were selected from a school down the street from the chapter headquarters, the families are transient and the kids are now scattered in 11 schools spread over three boroughs.

Clyman, who practiced law in Oregon, met Campbell in the 1970s and volunteered with the Portland Friends. When he moved to New York, he started the chapter there. "In Oregon there's a feeling you can make a difference," he said. "Here it's more complicated. These kids are up against difficulties Portland kids don't face."

More than half, he said, have a parent in jail, and 30 percent live in foster homes or with a grandparent.

"We have one girl from the Bronx who was in foster care but returned to her mother, who was a drug addict," he said. "The mom got back on drugs, and the girl went back to a foster home. She tried to harm herself and was sent to three different foster homes and then a shelter. This girl is 10 and the only stable influence on her life has been her Friend."

The most difficult task, Clyman said, has been raising money.

"We need to find a Duncan Campbell in New York," he said. "We need someone who has the resources and believes in us."

### **From Park Avenue to Harlem**

On a ride to west Harlem, Milton, Campbell and Clyman left Park Avenue behind. Empty storefronts and dilapidated buildings appeared on both sides of the street. Campbell peered out his window. For all his wealth, he was traveling in familiar surroundings, among the poor and those without hope.

In the space of an afternoon, he would see kids whose families were just hanging on and then meet with Atlantic Philanthropies, a foundation with nearly \$4 billion in assets.

The foundation had decided, in effect, to go out of business, giving its money away to programs that help young people. Next fall, the foundation's board plans to select 25 programs that it will fund for 10 years. Milton and Campbell hope the Friends program will be one of them.

Before walking into the Harlem Friends office, Clyman stopped in the street and said that shootings, murders and drug-dealing are part of the neighborhood backdrop. Even one of the Friends, a man who himself came from the streets, has told Clyman he's been in areas that scare him while taking one of his children home.

"We can't change where the children live," Clyman said as he led Milton and Campbell into the office, "but we can give them a place where they are safe and can see people live responsibly."

While Milton and Clyman talked about operations, Campbell wandered around the office. He saw the computer, the kitchen and the books -- a haven for children who have no place to go. It was a place he would have wanted when he was a child.

He turned the corner and met Jamali Corniel, who became a Friend two years ago. Corniel recognized Campbell and told him that most of the girls under her care live in single-parent homes. The others are raised by grandmothers or foster parents. All them, she said, are surrounded by crime and drugs.

"I experienced the same kind of life," she told Campbell. "A teacher changed my life in the sixth grade. Now I want to do the same thing."

"That's amazing," Campbell said.

"I just want to say thank you for starting Friends," she said.

Campbell stepped forward and wrapped her in his arms.

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