

# City People

The Greenville News

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## Scott Dishman

*Move from corporate world to nonprofits proves gratifying*

**By Donna Isbell Walker**

City People writer

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Six years ago, Scott Dishman stepped away from the corporate world. Making a difference in his community, he decided, was more important than savoring a nice paycheck.

And in doing that, Dishman found that his new world changed him as profoundly as he hopes to change it.

"The color of my sky is literally different now," says Dishman, director of community engagement for the Family Effect.

After graduating from the University of Texas, Dishman spent 21 years working in



"I believe you have to do more than care, you have to act," says Scott Dishman. DONNA ISBELL WALKER/STAFF

## Finding the mid

*Ovarian cancer spurred Carmen Brotherton to ac*

**By Donna Isbell Walker**

City People writer

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Ovarian cancer came as a huge shock to Carmen Brotherton.

There was no family history, Brotherton hadn't any symptoms, and she asked her doctor for a test because a friend was in treatment for ovarian cancer.

Fortunately, Brotherton's cancer was in the very early stages, treatable with surgery and chemotherapy. Now, three years later, she is "good," she says.

The experience spurred many things in her, most prominently a desire to educate other women about ovarian cancer and to



# Dishman wants to 'leave a different kind of mark'

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marketing and communications, most recently for Michelin.

"While I was there I took a real interest in highly disadvantaged kids, kids who through no fault of their own were being set up for failure in American life," says Dishman.

The more he read about poverty and abuse among children, the more he felt compelled to do something.

"I was enjoying my work in the corporate world, but I was feeling a need to leave a different kind of mark for myself," says Dishman. "But also to address some of these things that I saw lacking in local and national work. And whatever small role I could play in helping make that happen, I wanted to make it happen."

First up, Dishman sat down with his wife, Lydia, for a "very interesting discussion" about his new aspirations.

"You sit her down and you say, 'I'm at the height of my earning power right now and I'd like to earn far less money than I'm earning right now,'" he says with a wry chuckle.

Lydia's support was key to his ability to make the career change, Dishman says.

His first project was with A Child's Haven, where he was a board member, helping the organization embark on a capital campaign.

"I have to give a huge amount of credit to Veronica Inman. She was the executive director of A Child's Haven back in 2006, and she is the person who took a chance on me." A chance, he says, that "launched an amazing new path for me."

Since March 2010, Dishman has worked with the Family Effect, the philanthropic founda-



Scott Dishman has worked with the Family Effect for two years. DONNA ISBELL WALKER/STAFF

tion of the Phoenix Center, which provides substance abuse treatment and prevention programs. One of its programs goes straight to the heart of Dishman's concerns.

Serenity Place is the Phoenix Center's residential treatment facility for mothers who are battling addiction. Some are pregnant, others have young children. They can spend up to six months in the program, undergoing 50 hours of counseling each week.

Each woman can bring two children under age 6 with her for the duration of her stay, but Dishman says the organization will soon begin a fundraising campaign to expand the facility so that mothers can bring all of their children with them.

Sixteen women can go through the program at one time, and while the mothers are working through the issues behind their addictions, the children are being evaluated and treated for developmental delays or other difficulties.

It can be heartbreaking to see the children come to the center unable to speak correctly or walk properly at age 4 or 5, Dishman says.

"This is a rare jewel of a program to address that issue early," Dishman says.

Offering children the chance to grow up in a healthy, safe environ-

ment where they can thrive is important not just for each individual child but for society as a whole, he says.

"Every single one of these kids is going to grow up either to be a market asset to the national balance sheet or a market liability to the national balance sheet," he says.

The issue is even closer to his heart as Dishman watches his own daughters grow up. In fact, you could say the seed was planted with the birth of his daughter Deirdre 17 years ago. Dishman says he'd been a typical upwardly mobile young man who lived a life that was "all about me."

But fatherhood changed his perspective.

"When my first daughter came, I was just floored," Dishman says. "I was madly in love with this little baby girl, and now I'm madly in love with her little sister, too, and they're the ones who taught me what love really was, and it really wasn't about me."

As he began researching the issues of child abuse and neglect, he found a personal connection to the heart-wrenching stories and statistics.

"Picturing my own daughters in some of the situations that I was reading about other kids being in, I found it unbearable. Unbearable as an American, unbearable

## PROFILE

**Name:** Scott Dishman, director of community engagement at the Family Effect

**Family:** Wife, Lydia; daughters, Deirdre, 17 and Emily, 14

**Interests:** Classic cars, hiking, whitewater kayaking

as a father, that we would have kids suffering like that right under our noses. I believe you have to do more than care, you have to act."

As he gets to know the women who come through Serenity Place, Dishman sees their triumphs and setbacks.

There are college-educated women who get caught up in drugs and end up with a domino effect of bad life choices, while others seemingly never had a chance for another life, growing up in homes where drugs and sexual abuse were the norm.

He knows that not every woman will successfully break the cycle of addiction, and not every child will be able to escape the chains of poverty. But the positive outcomes help him cope with the disappointments.

"You balance the successes against the failures," he says.

And over the last six years, Dishman has found more satisfaction than he ever imagined.

"The leading of a life of service for me has been amazingly gratifying. Waking up and jumping out of bed in the morning to help transform the lives of other people is a lot more compelling than jumping out of the bed to go do something else, at least for me. I joked a couple of years ago that my job used to be the advancement of the quarterly numbers, and now it's the advancement of humanity. ... That really changes everything."



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