
THE MAGGIE FEISS FUND

GIFTS IN LOVE

*and celebration of
Maggie's spirit, energy,
and impatience for change
in a troubled world.*

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T H E
MAGGIE FEISS

FUND AND ENDOWMENT
FOR BALTIMORE



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BALTIMORE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION



Confirmed in Compliance with National Standards for U.S. Community Foundations

Maggie Feiss graduated from the University of Southern California in May 2008. She had majored in Urban Policy, Planning, and Development, and it was her declared intention eventually to come home and “fix Baltimore.”

Maggie knew some of Baltimore's problems. She had worked as a college intern with the Baltimore Community Foundation's Middle Grades Partnership, which gave her a sense of the challenges within the Baltimore City public schools. Because epilepsy prevented her from driving, she became an ardent user of and advocate for public transportation. She had helped rehab houses in some of Baltimore's most dilapidated neighborhoods when she was in high school and had worked in housing for the Enterprise Foundation in Los Angeles.



Maggie and Middle Grades Partnership co-worker, Makura Compton, July 2005

On the day before she was to begin work at Living Classrooms—the first job of her post-college career—Maggie Feiss died from a condition known as SUDEP (Sudden and Unexplained Death from EPilepsy). She was 22 years old. The personal loss to those who knew and loved her is immense, but the loss of her vision, her hope, her indomitable spirit, and her tireless work for change in the world is an even greater toll.

When Maggie was eight, she asked to be allowed to walk up the street to a retirement home where

she immediately made loads of friends whom she had fun playing games with and reading to. For her community service project at Bryn Mawr School, Maggie volunteered to work for the summer in the preschool connected with New Song Urban Ministries. Within two days, she knew the name of every one of the more than forty boys and girls who came to love her.

Nothing she did in her life meant more to Maggie than her leadership of the University of Southern California Relay for Life, a fundraiser for the American Cancer Society. She and her team brought Relay to the campus in her freshman year, and in her sophomore year, as co-coordinator of logistics, she helped USC Relay raise a significant amount for the cause.

Maggie had her devilish side. At the end of her freshman year at USC, she was identified as the ringleader of a cafeteria food fight. A condition of her return to school was to complete 100 hours of community service before graduation. Maggie pointed out that with all the service activities she was already engaged in, she would likely complete those hours within a couple of weeks. Once the Dean understood the sort of community activist she was dealing with, she just made Maggie promise that all of her future planning would be for constructive purposes. Maggie kept that promise.

After Maggie's death, it was less than a day before her mother, father and brother began talking about a memorial fund. There was no question that the fund would be with the Baltimore Community Foundation, an organization which Maggie knew and respected; she had even made a presentation about BCF in one of her policy classes at USC.



Maggie's brother Steve visiting with her at USC

BCF staff walked the family through the nuts and bolts, and the Maggie Feiss Fund was created. Its purpose is to help the causes which Maggie worked hard for and cared deeply about: cancer research and care, urban renewal and development, public transportation, gay rights advocacy, educational opportunity, and diversity. Her family added one more purpose: support for people with epilepsy.

Within days, a page for the Maggie Feiss Fund was posted on the BCF website, enabling people to contribute online. The outpouring of gratitude for Maggie's life has been overwhelming and a huge comfort to her family. In the early months, when donations were streaming in, Maggie's family was grateful that BCF took care of all of the acknowledgements. BCF also has provided support to Maggie's family and friends in planning events to raise additional money for the fund.

That Maggie's life was cut short is an unspeakable tragedy, but out of that loss have come many blessings. One of the greatest is the Maggie Feiss Fund and Endowment for Baltimore. Clearly, if Maggie had lived to pursue her vision for Baltimore, the impact of her work would have been deep and permanent. This endowment in her name, which will support her dreams in perpetuity, is a vehicle for some of the good work Maggie would have done herself and a source of comfort for her family in knowing that part of her lives on.