

# SAINT MARY'S SCHOOL

## Alumnae Profile

### Natalie Carter Hyde '86HS '88C

Co-Owner

*Aesthetic Images Photography*

#### **Snapshots Through Time**

Natalie Carter Hyde '86HS '88C is a wife and mother. She is active in Church and community. She's also a successful business owner, award winning photographer, and teacher.

Natalie attributes Saint Mary's for playing a major part of her foundation, leading to success as an adult.

"Saint Mary's gave me the stability I needed; it was a loving, supportive environment that offered the boundaries, discipline, and order I could use to build a strong foundation."

Natalie arrived at 900 Hillsborough Street in August 1984 having only recently considered the school as an option. She grew up in Summit, New Jersey. Her mother, Mickey Jane Singletary Carter, 63C, and grandmother Pauline Bernhardt Carter '42C, spoke fondly of their experiences at the school, but the Fall of '84 was Natalie's first step on the grounds.

"Those first days are very blurry, because it all happened so fast," she says. "I was given my own room in Smedes because everyone else was already paired up. It was on fourth floor and felt like a closet." She ventured out to the only store in Cameron Village at the time – Kerr Drug – to outfit her room. It was an anxious first year made better by Housemother Frances Bell.

"Ma Bell was really helpful getting me into the Saint Mary's groove. I was scared and intimidated because I didn't know anyone, but they paired me with a Big Sister who was a northerner like me, Lynn Cowell Ives '85HS '87C from New York, and that helped," she explains.

With a support system in place, Natalie adapted into her high school years. She was embraced by the girls in the Granddaughters' Club, who took her in as one of their own, and selected for The Circle. She blossomed further in college. During her senior year, she participated on the Student Council with roommate Leigh McAdoo Kempf '88C.

"Leigh was funny and outgoing, and we had a great time. And I love seeing Leigh and her family, now."

Natalie says she was surprised during her graduation when she was announced as the recipient of *The Mariam D Graham Award*. Established in 1968, the recipient is chosen by a faculty representative, the student body, and Saint Mary's alumnae on the basis of character, academic achievement, spirit of leadership, and contributions to campus life.

"I was overwhelmed and grateful," she says.

#### **The Confidence to Fly**

As a four-year girl, Saint Mary's gave Natalie the confidence to take a leap of faith and travel outside the Carolinas for college, when many others were heading off down the road.

Because of the Saint Mary's foundation, she chose to spread her wings and attended Ohio Wesleyan University where she received her Bachelor of Arts in Literature. Natalie then adventured to the United Kingdom where she completed a Master of Arts in Literary Theory and Criticism from the University of New Castle.

"It was when I came home to visit my family that I met Jeff," she says.

Natalie and her future husband and business partner, Jeff, began dating. Within a year they were married, settling in Greensboro. In 1998, Natalie and Jeff's son Joe was born. Two years later, Henry came along. It was during these early years as a mom that Natalie discovered a box of her late father's travel photographs, while renovating their home.

"I felt something very deeply," she says. "Memories of time with my dad in his dark room rushed back. I didn't know I wanted to be a photographer, but that was the spark."



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### *From Hobby to Career*

Encouraged by these memories, in 2003, she enrolled in a photography class at UNC-Greensboro. After her second class, and at her professor's prompting and guidance, Natalie submitted work to the prestigious Maine Media Workshops. She won a summer scholarship to attend. In Rockport, Maine she studied under the internationally-acclaimed, commercial photographer Bobbie Lane. She grew her talent.

That fall, Natalie began working as an associate photographer for Aesthetic Images Photography (AIP) and began pursuing certification with the Professional Photographers of America (PPA). Joining the ranks of only three percent of photographers in America, Natalie received certification and in 2006, she purchased AIP. A year later, Jeff joined her to run the operations.

Over the years, Natalie and AIP have photographed people, both significant and ordinary. Her work has been published worldwide and enhances the homes of families across the South. The studio has won multiple awards and is considered a leader in photographic arts in North Carolina. Their success lies in Natalie's unique approach to photography and the "intimate notes" she creates and keeps about her clients as she prepares for a session.

"I want to know about their history, traditions, and those little things that are important to them. It's important to me and helps me capture those moments in time they can cherish forever."

Civic minded, the couple cares about the communities in which they work most: Greensboro, High Point and Winston-Salem, Raleigh and Durham. They have partnered with various nonprofit organizations in each of these areas. For example, in Guilford County, AIP supports Family Service of the Piedmont with photography services and products for the Board, and management team, the FSP newsletter, and various fundraising events, pro bono. They have partnered with similar worthwhile organizations in the other towns.

Their sons are now in college, providing more opportunity to invest in their communities. Natalie now shares her photography talent, teaching in a school in Greensboro and is a board member for the American Heart Association. Jeff is a founder and current President of a Charter School in an underserved community in Greensboro and sits on the North Carolina Rules Review Commission. They stay busy!

Natalie and Jeff are grateful for their lives, and the freedoms it affords them. "As our sons got older, we were able to homeschool them in high school while also traveling, learning, and exploring together as a family. Now, Joe is a junior and Henry a freshman at NCSU, just down the road from Saint Mary's."

Natalie supports her alma mater by staying connected to classmates, attending reunions and regional gatherings, and recently agreed to participate in a future career panel to discuss her journey to find her passion and unique career.

For today's Saint Mary's girls, she says: "Be present and appreciate Saint Mary's; don't be in such a rush to leave! Take time to build your own foundation of stability and strength and use it to jump off, try something new, fail, succeed, try again, change your mind, and do it again and again. Saint Mary's graduates are fortunate to be in a safe, nurturing, and loving environment. I know you'll look back, as I do, in appreciation."

Natalie embodies the spirit of Saint Mary's women who are resilient, intelligent, resourceful, passionate, and nurturing, and who are educated to make a difference

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