

## **John and Mary McGown**

John McGown and Mary Grunewald McGown of Boise met during a blizzard in Greeley, Colorado on New Year's Eve in 1975. Mary was supposed to go on a date with John's neighbor, but it was too snowy. They decided to stay in and have a party instead. Mary invited her sister and the neighbor invited John.

"John and I just hit it off," Mary said. Since then they've had two adventurous daughters, active careers and an enviable travel itinerary. Community involvement is important to them and they've served as volunteers, board members and donors to many Treasure Valley organizations.

They established the McGown Family Foundation in 2006 to teach their daughters about philanthropy and to provide grants to local, national and even international nonprofits.

John, who is of counsel at the law firm Hawley Troxell and specializes in tax and estate planning, has been the Idaho Community Foundation's attorney since 1990. When it came time for them to plan their estates, they wanted to include ICF in their plans.

"Often my clients come in with the intent to leave everything to their children. I think it's better to think about what's the right amount to leave to the children," John said. "In some cases 'everything' is the right amount. But in other cases, it is not. By giving some thought to answering the question of the right amount, clients come up with a more considered estate plan."

The McGowns considered that question themselves and decided that the family foundation will be distributed to an ICF non-endowed donor advised fund on John's death. An additional contribution will come from John's retirement account.

John noted one advantage about transferring his retirement account to an ICF fund, instead of making his daughters the beneficiaries: The fund at ICF won't pay income tax when it receives the retirement account. If the retirement account was distributed to his daughters on his death, roughly one-third would need to be used to pay income taxes.

John said his clients used to include nonprofits in their estate plans because there were tax advantages to be gained, but he sees less of that now.

"If they give to charity it's because the organization is important to them and has been important to them throughout their lives," he said.

The McGowns talked to their daughters Erin and Brenna about converting the family foundation to an ICF fund and the girls were enthusiastic about the idea. Maintaining a private foundation

can be labor intensive and expensive, and an ICF fund offers many of the same benefits. Erin and Brenna will be able to make recommendations about which organizations should receive grants and they can also make grants of any size.

ICF funds are established to primarily grant in Idaho and since both McGown girls have left Idaho for the time being they may want to spend the fund down by giving larger grants to some favorite organizations.

“They said there’s a certain satisfaction in making large grants,” John said.

Erin currently lives in Washington, D.C. and works for USAID. She’s planning to go into the Peace Corps and will apply for assignment in the Republic of Georgia. Brenna has worked for the Oregon Legislature, AmeriCorps and as a wildland firefighter in Idaho. She most recently lived in New Zealand working for an outdoor sports company in Queensland.

John and Mary are both Master Naturalists who have traveled throughout the West and all over the world, hiking, rafting and monitoring wildlife populations.

“Mary likes international travel and I’m happy to focus on Idaho and the West,” John said.

“I’ll go just about any place,” Mary said smiling.