

Gap co-founder Don Fisher dies at 81

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Don Fisher, who co-founded Gap, Inc. with his wife Doris in 1969, died Sunday of cancer in his San Francisco home at the age of 81. Along with founding the Gap, Don Fisher was one of the country's most visionary education philanthropists. As a product of California's public schools, Don believed deeply that all students were entitled to the same high quality public education that he was fortunate to receive.

"Don viewed the improvement of public education as a moral imperative," explained Christopher Nelson, Managing Director of the Doris & Donald Fisher Fund. "It was his hope that he could contribute in some way to helping our public education system realize its potential to be the 'great equalizer' so that all children, regardless of their background, could attain a high quality education to prepare them for success in college, work and life."

Don was the driving force behind two of the most important and successful education reform organizations in the country – KIPP (Knowledge Is Power Program) and Teach For America. Since 2000, Don and his wife, Doris, donated more than \$100 million to KIPP and Teach For America.

In 2000, Doris and Don gave \$15 million to create the KIPP Foundation, an organization designed to recruit, train, and support aspiring KIPP school leaders as they opened new schools across the United States. KIPP grew from 2 schools in 1999 to a network of 82 free, open-enrollment, college-preparatory public charter schools serving 20,000 students in underserved communities. Don served as the chairman of the KIPP board of directors from 2003 until his death. Doris and their son, John, are also board members.

"Don knew that demography does not have to be destiny when it comes to a child's education, and he used his incredible mind, heart and generosity to show that powerful lesson to the country," said KIPP Foundation CEO Richard Barth. "Don helped prove what is possible in public education. Because of his efforts, hundreds of thousands of children have had doors of opportunity opened and their future will be his great legacy."

Don's financial support, strategic guidance and personal commitment were also critical to the growth of Teach For America, which recruits top college graduates to serve as teachers in the country's neediest public schools and serve as life-long leaders in the effort to eliminate educational inequality in America. Through a seed-grant of \$8 million dollars in 2000, Don helped spur an eight-fold increase in the number of Teach For America teachers (known as 'corps members') placed in high-need public school classrooms each year, from 500 in 1999 to more than 4,000 in 2009. Last year, 35,000 recent college graduates, including more than 10 percent of Ivy League seniors, competed to join Teach For America and teach in a high-poverty school. Don also served as a member of the Teach For America board of directors.

"Don Fisher's vision and personal engagement changed Teach For America's trajectory. He challenged us to grow, investing significant financial resources and personal time in helping Teach For America build the capacity to enlist thousands of our nation's most promising future leaders in the effort to achieve educational excellence and equity," explains Teach For American founder and CEO Wendy Kopp. "He deeply believed that economically disadvantaged children have the potential to excel and in the potential of entrepreneurship to

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re-make our public education system so that it provides opportunity for all, and we feel so fortunate to have had his constant moral support and his mentorship.”

In addition, Don was a long-time member of the California State Board of Education and a supporter of the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, where he served as a governor. He also played an instrumental role in creating or growing many other highly regarded education reform organizations, including the California Charter Schools Association, the Charter School Growth Fund, EdVoice, The New Teacher Project and the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools.

Don is survived by his wife Doris, and by his three sons and their wives, Bob and Randi, Bill and Sako, and John and Laura, as well as 10 grandchildren. He is also survived by two brothers and their wives, Jim and Diane Fisher and Bob and Ann Fisher.