

Katherine Alexandra St. Amour

HIGH PROFILE: Katie St. Amour wanted more out of life than a career in finance. Now she is changing lives through her work with the Heifer Foundation

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From whatever angle one looks at it, Katie St. Amour has enjoyed success at every stage of her life. From her comfortable upbringing in Connecticut to an adventuresome collegiate experience to a high-powered first career in finance with some

of the major firms in New York City, hers has been the epitome of leveraging the right opportunities and making the correct turns in life.

Yet a nagging discordant note rang out, time and again, at each stage of the young professional's journey, the dogged pang there was something more -- more than what she was born into and more than what the first acts of her career afforded her.

That lifelong muse beckoned her far from the Eastern Seaboard to attend college in the foreign Big Easy; spoke clearly what time it was to change careers in the Big Apple; and looks over her shoulder today in her work as vice president of investments and finance for the Heifer Foundation in Little Rock.

Most recently it has inspired her, along with her husband, Dr. Eddie St. Amour, to chair the Jan. 31 Woman of the Year gala benefiting Women and Children First, a Little Rock organization that provides assistance to survivors of domestic violence.

"Everyone has something to give," she says of the cause and of the couple's decision to take a leadership role in the event. "I want people to be aware of (Women and Children First's) work that's going on in the community and the need to support it. Bringing people together and raising awareness, I want to create the understanding that everyone has something they can do to build community. It's important that everyone does something."

Katie St. Amour shares these views from a glass-encased office in the world headquarters of Heifer International, where she began in 2018, moving to the organization's Heifer Foundation in 2023. The sleek, jewel-box surroundings are quiet but there's a lot more going on here than meets the eye, radiating from Little Rock to villages and hamlets all over the world.

Heifer has evolved substantially since its founding, but its mission remains intact: helping to take the art and science of self-sufficiency to people worldwide through agriculture and entrepreneurship, escalators from generational poverty to a life of brighter, more abundant promise. All of which takes money, and a not-inconsequential amount at that, which is where the foundation comes in. Discussing the work, one experiences St. Amour at her most passionate.

"Heifer works predominantly with women, so female empowerment is a huge part of the field work," she says. "When we go visit these places, the women will speak and they're so proud of their farms, they're proud of their work. In Nepal, a lot of women who are either part of Heifer's programs or have worked with us in the past are even political leaders in their communities now. It's amazing to see."

WELCOME TO THE DEEP SOUTH

St. Amour's life began comfortably, the younger of two daughters born into an upper middle-class household. Growing up she had a good circle of friends yet didn't strive to be overly involved in things. She took part in athletics and the arts in school, and while showing some ability in the latter, never felt that anything fully clicked as her singular gift.

"We lived in Greenwich, Conn., and we had a very nice, comfortable life. There were people who were much more privileged than us, but we didn't want for anything," she says. "As soon as I was old enough to get a job I got a job, I think I was 15 or 16 at the time, but it wasn't because we couldn't buy something. I got a job because I always wanted to work and contribute and have my own thing."

"I was social and had close friendships and different things, but I wasn't in, like, a ton of groups or anything. I think in certain ways I probably had leadership qualities growing up but I wasn't super confident in them. I didn't think of myself as a leader."

St. Amour's approach to things -- happy to be involved while not needing involvement to be happy -- set up college as a time of great awakening. Even her choice of school, Tulane University in far-off New Orleans, spoke of someone looking to step outside of her own long-held perspectives.

"As I learned about how other people grew up or different opportunities that I had, I felt a certain responsibility," she says. "My parents let me pick where I wanted to apply to college and, once I got in, I got to pick where I got to go which is a huge privilege. I think I felt then a responsibility to do something with it."

SETTLED INTO TULANE

Following an intense year of culture shock, St. Amour settled into Tulane and the city.

"The first year was a really hard adjustment but it was such a meaningful part of my story because of how different it was," she says. "I'd go home at the holidays and I was having such a different experience than someone who went to Boston College or somewhere else locally or in the northeast."

"New Orleans is a special place, I'd say it's the most dynamic city in the U.S., so different and yet I think I knew that it was the right place. Like, when I got there, it felt like the right place. It was still hard, being far away from home, adjusting to being responsible for going to class on your own and all that but I still felt like I fit in there."

Leveraging a natural gift for mathematics, St. Amour graduated with a degree in finance and a minor in history then shortly thereafter, on the recommendation of a professor, she earned her master's in accounting, all from Tulane.

"That (master's degree) feeds into the Big Four accounting firms, audit or tax. It's like a guaranteed job," she says. "I got offers from all the Big Four."

Her career would lead her to New York where she worked for nearly a decade with KPMG and Deloitte, the latter as manager of mergers and acquisitions transaction services. She advanced steadily over that time and gained a lot of experience but the voice in her head about her true purpose in life was already starting to grow louder.

"I knew that corporate finance would never be something I wanted to do for that long, but I also knew it would be a good experience," she says. "I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do then, but I knew I'd have to do some time there to be able to move on once I figured out what I really wanted to do."

A RADICAL CAREER TURN

By 2015, weary of the rat race and wanting a semblance of normalcy in which to start a family, St. Amour took a radical career turn by taking a strategy and planning job with the New York Road Runners.

"My husband and I had started running these races in New York at a time when I needed to do something else," she says. "I was looking to sign up for a race and saw they had a strategy job, and I was like, yes, this sounds so interesting. It was a

leap of faith; it was different from what I'd been doing which was accounting, audit, mergers and acquisitions, financial analysis and other sorts of diligence. But the job was also strategy and planning and that fit my skill set."

The nonprofit organization puts on about 50 races a year, directing entry fees and other proceeds toward various youth programs.

"They provide curriculum and incentives and different things for schools, a lot of them in New York City but also across the country, for physical education," she says. "A lot of the schools don't have gyms. They didn't have a budget. They didn't have teachers. Road Runners would help the art teacher, for instance, take kids during some period and run them up and down the stairs and do these different activities."

The job also provided St. Amour something that the high-pressure world of finance never could: connection to the community and a sense of purpose.

"One thing that's been very important to Katie and to myself is to lead by example and she truly embodies that," her husband, Eddie, says. "She came from the somewhat glamorous world of mergers and acquisitions where she had a pretty high-profile job in New York City and she left it because she wanted to do more and she felt her calling was really on the nonprofit side. When she did that, she found her community. I just have a huge amount of pride in her."

FINDING A HOME AT HEIFER

After a brief detour in Miami, Eddie, a Little Rock native, landed a position with CARTI and the family landed in Arkansas. A few months after arriving in 2018, the now-mother-of-two was on staff at Heifer International.

"I probably didn't have to work, and (Eddie) still tells me I don't have to, but I wanted to," she says. "I loved working at a mission-oriented organization, Road Runners, which is very different from Heifer, but was still about building community and giving back to the community. I saw (Heifer) as another way, after having a career in Wall Street finance, that I would get to use my skills for good."

In St. Amour's case, that meant working in a variety of capacities, including Heifer's Impact Capital which is money invested in projects related to the organization's programs to help ensure their success. Such lending addresses a variety of needs, from solar panels for a remote dairy operation to help ensure milk chillers didn't fail due to sketchy power sources to bolstering market opportunities for Heifer-enabled growers and producers worldwide.

"We would do these investments in the communities that Heifer works in to further the work of the organization," she says. "These were the kinds of low-interest loans that a local bank would not have made due to being too risky."

In 2023, St. Amour moved over to Heifer Foundation, the fundraising arm that supports the work of Heifer International, where she helps oversee an investment portfolio worth \$220 million. St. Amour describes it as investing with conscience, screening out stocks that don't mesh with the group's values and directing funds toward that which is aligned philosophically and, as much as possible, proximally to Heifer's work.

'QUICK MIND, CURIOUS INTELLECT'

"Katie is incredibly professional; a quick mind and curious intellect," says Kim Dempsey, president of the foundation. "She has a really impressive balance of confidence in her technical skills and humility around areas where she still has

room to learn and grow. I really appreciate that as the head of the foundation, specifically her background in consulting.

"We need to work very effectively across our organization and I think Katie's orientation to be of service, to be responsive and adaptive to the needs of partners while putting her own expertise to good use and in good practice, makes her a really strong leader for the foundation."

Beyond its financial and strategic elements, St. Amour also stresses the human side of the foundation's mission. Traveling to such locales as Honduras, Cambodia, Ecuador, Guatemala and elsewhere brings the impact of the money being invested to life and keeps the work from being reduced to mere numbers on a page.

"A lot of accounting staff, operations staff don't get to see the work they're supporting but we thought it was really important for everyone on the team to see that," St. Amour says. "The whole foundation staff went to Ecuador a couple months ago to see the work and it was life-changing for them."

"I mean, you can read the articles about the work we're doing, you can watch videos but until you go to someone's farm and talk to people, even through a translator, you can't really understand the impact that Heifer's had in changing outcomes. I think seeing it and touching it is really the ultimate experience."

WOMEN AND CHILDREN FIRST

St. Amour has taken her drive to create impact into volunteer opportunities as well, from serving on the parents' organization at her children's school to serving on the Arkansas Children's Hospital auxiliary board to her work with Women and Children First which led to her and Eddie co-chairing this year's gala.

She says ever since she was introduced to the organization by longtime Women and Children First mover and shaker Tiffany Robinson, she has been committed to the nonprofit's mission of providing help to individuals scarred by domestic violence, an audience that numbers in the hundreds annually. Coincidentally, Robinson will be honored as the organization's Woman of the Year at this year's event.

"Tiffany was one of the first people I met at Pulaski Academy where our sons go to school together and we became friends," she says. "We have values in common and she is very plugged into the community and so she got me involved with (Arkansas Children's Hospital) when she was the chair of the Miracle Ball a few years ago."

"We are similar in a lot of ways and when she brought me and my husband in this year to chair the (Women and Children First) event, it parallels the things that we value, my husband and I. Even though I don't have a personal connection to domestic violence, it's prevalent and it is a big part of many people's story."

These are heady times for Women and Children First. In late 2024, the nonprofit broke ground on its long-anticipated Forest of Hope Family Peace Center, a \$17 million campus that will provide more than 100 beds while housing multiple services under one roof to help facilitate programs and put resources within easy reach of survivors seeking help.

"The solutions are comprehensive," St. Amour says. "They're not just doing one little intervention at the Forest of Hope Family Peace Center; they're creating this comprehensive plan. A woman can go there and talk to the legal side of it, the medical side of it, everything in one place."

Today St. Amour's muse, the voice that called her to seek something more, is something she moves to in tempo, rhythm and key. Wherever she looks in her life, she sees how the moorings of her professional and personal happiness lead back to common pillars, be it in the form of a family coffee farm hewn out of the jungle or children at the Women and Children First shelter whose mother is looking to carve out a space of her own from which to start over.

"I remember when (Eddie and I) went to visit the shelter, there were a few women with their children out on the patio, and we came up and the kids ran right up to us, smiling," she says.

"The resilience of children, I mean, they know something's going on, probably, but they're just resilient. That's the future. And I think about when we go to communities and meet the people that Heifer works with, the women, the men, they're all working to make a better future for their kids. That's such a powerful thing. Then, in doing what I do every day, I realize every decision I make is for my family, my children. It reminds me that we're more similar than different in the world."

SELF PORTRAIT

Katie St. Amour

MY FAVORITE BOOK IN THE LAST YEAR WOULD BE: "The Women" by Kristin Hannah. I minored in history at Tulane and have always loved exploring the past through historical fiction. This book honors the often-overlooked resilience and bravery of the women who served in the Vietnam War, while capturing the complexity of that moment in history.

MY PERSONAL MOTTO IS: Think ahead. My mom used to leave post-it notes around the house for me and my sister with "Think ahead" written on them. A subtle reminder to be more thoughtful in our actions. She'll be thrilled to know that it has stuck with me.

THE ONE THING I BELIEVE TO BE TRUE ABOUT PEOPLE IS: Everyone has a story. People have been shaped by countless moments. Curiosity about a person's story shapes stronger perspectives and builds stronger relationships.

THE HARDEST PIECE OF CRITICISM I EVER RECEIVED WAS: That I needed to slow down long enough to bring others along with me. I love to find solutions and move quickly, so it was difficult to hear that my pace could unintentionally leave other perspectives out. It challenged me to rethink how I collaborate, to communicate more intentionally and create space for others to contribute.

THE SECRET TO MY HAPPINESS IS: Traveling with good company, seeing the world's beauty and learning from people of different backgrounds. In 2026 we have a family trip to Japan for my mom's 80th birthday, a visit to Heifer's work in India and Nepal, skiing with friends in Colorado and family time at a dude ranch in Dubois, Wyo.

MY GUILTY PLEASURE: Would have to be something sweet. I am currently thinking about the cornmeal cookie from Fidel & Co. or a king cake from Sucre in New Orleans.

I CONSIDER MY PROUDEST ACCOMPLISHMENT TO BE: Raising my children -- Cooper, 9, and Charlotte, 7 -- with my husband. It's still very much a work in progress but nothing makes me prouder than watching them bring to life the values we work to instill in them.

THE ONE WORD THAT DESCRIBES ME: Willing. Those close to me know I have trouble saying no, but I think it's because I thrive on the possibility of impact. Every yes lets me contribute to more impactful outcomes.

