

CORNELIUS LAKESIDE LIVING

Cover photo by Sarah Ann Photography

BILL *and* ERICKA CAIN:

Family and
Philanthropy



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Bill and Ericka Cain

What do you love about Cornelius?



“We love Cornelius and the four-county Lake Norman region. We live here, work here and play here. That is why we are so excited to support the arts center. It is the finishing touch we need to show our Southern hospitality and cultural diversity.”

industry, as well as his involvement in the real estate development at Bailey’s Glen and Bailey Forest. Both developments are 55 and older communities off of Bailey Road. Most importantly, Bill is considered a man of integrity and knowledge—his honest and ethical business practices have earned him much deserved respect and admiration. Ericka is his biggest cheerleader and partner in all of their businesses.

FIG has always been a family affair, and Ericka has had many roles over the years working side by side with her husband. While FIG’s Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), she developed many of the administrative programs and practices that earned the company its reputation as one of the most efficient and best customer service Independent Marketing Organization (IMO) in the country. The company continues to maintain a place of excellence in the industry today. In 2017, Ericka stepped down as CAO and has taken the role of Executive Administrator. Her daughter, Tracia, took over her role as CAO after working as Director of Administrative Services for many years. Currently, Ericka mainly works with the executive officers on the overall development of the company. “I truly miss the day-to-day running of the company, but at this point in my life, I find it to taxing to keep up with the fast pace of our office. It is best left to our talented officers and staff,” comments Ericka.

Bill and Ericka have four living children, Marc, Daniel, Tracia and Caroline. Marc lives in Davidson with his wife, Deborah, and has two grown boys, Jonathan and Austin. Daniel, his wife, Andrea, and two children, Joe and Scout, live near Pinehurst. Tracia and her husband, Bob, live in Cornelius with their two boys, Brandon and Boden. Caroline and her husband, Mike, also live in Cornelius and have two girls, Morgan and Mollie.

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By Caroline Campbell
Photos by Sarah Ann Photography

Bill and Ericka Cain, along with their children, are longstanding members of the Cornelius community. While the Cain family name has recently become synonymous with the future of the arts scene in Cornelius, thanks to their incredibly generous donation to help fund the new Cain Center for the Arts, they have been quietly making an impact in the community for years.

Bill’s career has a background around ministry and education. He is an author and speaker on a national level, and for the past 43 years, has focused on the financial services industry. In 1976, Bill established Cain and Associates, Inc., which later became Financial Independence Group (FIG), where he currently serves as President and CEO. Bill has always had an entrepreneurial spirit which is evident in his contributions to the financial services



Bill, Ericka, son-in-law Mike and daughter, Caroline



FIG CFA Mike Mullan, COO Brian Williams and CMO Jim Cooper



FIG CAO Tracia Cericola

Their son and partner in FIG, Bo, passed away December 5, 2009 from Bronchioloalveolar Carcinoma (BAC), a lung cancer, at the age of 37. His wife, Christi, and their daughter, Addi, live nearby in Cornelius. Christi has since married a wonderful man, Eric Kees, who brought with him two more grandchildren, Allie and Lizzie. The newest addition to the Kees family, Adam, was born in November 2016. "In all, we have 12 grandchildren and two great grandchildren who are all beautiful, smart, talented and so sweet, and we are not the least bit biased!"

Bo was an outstanding man who was always happy, cultivated true friendships with people in every walk of life and achieved success beyond measure. He showed compassion for those in need, concern for everyone he knew and lived a life of faith and determination. Bo never gave up, and he left the same way he lived—with a sense of peace and final victory. His death not only left a void in his family's hearts but also in their business. He was Chief Marketing Officer and the Cain's succession plan. After his death, they contemplated selling the company and had several opportunities to sell, but it just didn't seem right. "We were concerned about the staff and what would become of them with new ownership—we didn't want anyone to be replaced or laid off," recalls Ericka. Several of their staff stepped up to the challenge within weeks of Bo's death. Jim Cooper filled the role of CMO, son-in-law Mike Mullan transitioned from sales to CFO, and Brian Williams took on the task of COO. Each of these talented young men had just the perfect skillset to take on these important roles. "Bo would be so proud of each of them." Actually, the entire company pitched in to keep the company running smoothly. "We work with so many great people who possess a tremendous amount of talent."

Because FIG began with family and friends, Bill and Ericka have been integral in keeping a family culture front and center at the office. Their daughter, Tracia, and son-in-law, Mike, work with them, as well as many old college friends of their son Bo, who they count as their adopted children. Caroline, their youngest daughter, was Director of Finance at FIG until she chose to stay at home with her children. Their daughter-in-law, Christi, works with them at sister company, Alpha Star Capital Management.

Just as running a family-centered business is important to Bill and Ericka so is giving back to our Cornelius community. They have always tried to lend a helping hand to neighbors in need. Bill and Ericka do give to a few charitable organizations, but mainly try to help people they meet and see as they go about daily

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life. "There are people you interact with every day that never ask for anything but just need a little bit of help to make their lives better," comments Ericka. "Sometimes it's a single mother struggling to get an old car running to be able to go to work, or it could be helping with a college tuition." Once a friend asked them to help a single mother move to a better neighborhood because her two teenage children were being pressured to join a gang. Just imagine how those lives may have been changed. Another way the Cain's feel like they contribute is by giving people an opportunity for a successful career. Especially in the early years, FIG was the very first job for many of the friends and friends of friends and family we hired. With Bill's background in counseling psychology, he was an excellent mentor and teacher. And, they like to think their executive team and directors continue to do this today.

They also encourage giving through their company. FIG has a Charitable Service Committee that identifies opportunities to positively impact our community. They have three ongoing projects that they support—The Ronald McDonald House, Bags of Hope and Ada Jenkins. It was very much a surprise, as well as an honor, to both be recognized in 2017. Bill received the Robert T. Cashion Person of the Year Business Award, and Ericka received a Lifetime Achievement Award for Business Today for their outstanding contributions in our community.

When Bill and Ericka first heard about the proposed arts center in Cornelius, they were thrilled. When they saw the initial presentation and model, they were hooked. "We knew we had to contribute as much as we could to make it happen. We did not plan to advertise our gift, and we didn't expect the center to be named after us. We

just truly wanted to give a substantial gift to get the project off and running." The Cain Center for the Arts will give the entire Lake Norman region access to so many different kinds of arts and community experiences. It will feature a 400-seat theater, gallery space, event space, classrooms, an outdoor park and downtown plaza. Even before the building is built, the arts center is bringing programs to schools and bringing the community together for events and performances—many people, young and old, will benefit from this project now and far into the future. The Cain Center

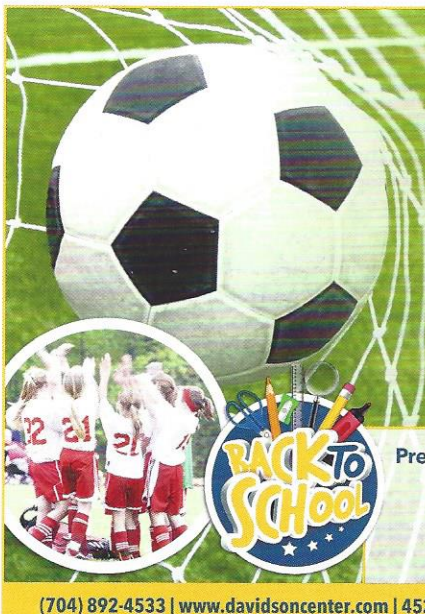
for the Arts fundraising is over halfway to reality, but they still have a long way to go. "I would encourage everyone to give generously to this worthwhile project. Any amount is welcome and very much appreciated," says Ericka. "The sooner we can build it, the sooner we can all enjoy the many amenities."

From all of us at *Lakeside Living*, thank you, Bill and Ericka, for your generosity and continued contributions that will surely have lasting effects for generations to come.

Conceptual rendering of Cain Center for the Arts as of July 2019



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