



Bob and Jan Davidson Founders of the Davidson Institute for Talent Development

In 1999, philanthropists Bob and Jan Davidson founded the Davidson Institute for Talent Development, a 501(c)3 operating foundation whose mission is to recognize, nurture and support profoundly gifted young people and to provide opportunities for them to develop their talents in positive ways to create value for themselves and others (www.davidson-institute.org).

The Davidson's commitment to serving our nation's profoundly gifted young people grew from their backgrounds in education and their belief that each person has a responsibility to make a positive contribution to society. Bob and Jan's vision for the institute, like all of their previous endeavors, was extremely well-conceived and well-researched.

Jan's interest in education and computers began in the late 1970s when she was working as a teacher in Los Angeles. She noticed her three young children were enthralled by computer games and realized their potential as learning tools for her students. She searched for software that combined learning and games, but could find none. Determined to help her students learn with engaging computer programs, she worked with a computer programmer to design some simple learning games.

Her student's response to these very early computer learning games was so enthusiastic that many parents and teachers wanted to purchase the products. So, in 1982 Jan founded the educational software publishing firm, Davidson & Associates, Inc., with \$6,000 from her children's college funds. Thus, began Jan's term as president of the company providing leadership and vision for hundreds of successful products, including the popular *Math Blaster™* and *Reading Blaster™* series.

By the late 1980s, Davidson & Associates had grown tremendously with revenues of almost \$8 million. Needing an experienced CEO to manage the company, Jan realized her husband Bob, who was Executive Vice President of Engineering and Construction at Parsons Corporation, was the best candidate. In 1989 Bob Davidson became Chairman and CEO.

During the next few years, Davidson & Associates formed partnerships with Fisher Price and Simon & Schuster and made several strategic acquisitions including Blizzard Entertainment, a small entertainment software developer whose products *Warcraft™*, *Starcraft™* and *Diablo™* became runaway best sellers.

In 1993, Davidson & Associates went public (NASDAQ) and grew into a multi-million dollar corporation, recognized by *Business Week*, *Fortune* and *Forbes* as one of the best small-growth companies in the world. In 1996, the company was purchased by CUC International (now Cendant Corporation) for \$1.15 billion.

After selling their company, Bob and Jan decided to focus on philanthropic endeavors in their lifelong passion of helping young people become successful learners. In their

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research of ways they could make a positive difference, they realized that our nation's brightest students are one of the most underserved and neglected student populations in America's educational system. Thus, in 1999 they founded the Davidson Institute for Talent Development to nurture and support profoundly gifted young people.

Throughout their lives, Bob and Jan have both translated their love of learning into their own pursuits of higher education. Bob has a Juris Doctorate degree from George Washington University, a Masters in Business Administration from the University of California-Los Angeles (UCLA) and a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemical Engineering from Purdue University. Jan earned a Ph.D. in American Studies and a Masters in Communication from the University of Maryland, as well as a Bachelor of Arts in Education and Communication from Purdue University. She has received an Honorary Doctorate of Law from Pepperdine University and an Honorary Doctorate of Education from Purdue University.

Bob and Jan have both received numerous awards for their contributions in the business world and as philanthropists. Some of Bob's awards include the George Washington University Alumni Achievement Award and the Los Angeles County Chamber of Commerce Outstanding Community Service Award. In 1996, the California Business Association named him "CEO of the Year." Jan's recognitions and awards include the Woman Entrepreneur of the Year, American Academy of Achievement's Golden Plate of Excellence, Technology Hall of Fame, EDNET Hero and Family PC's Pioneer Award.

In addition, Bob serves as a director/trustee for George Washington University, KCET-Public Television and Pepperdine University. He also is a member of the Governor of Nevada's Task Force on Entrepreneurship and mentors entrepreneurs. Jan serves as President of the Davidson Institute for Talent Development and The Davidson Foundation. She is also on the Advisory Board of the National Association for Gifted Children.

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