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John McCain's Charitable Contributions

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His kids' private schools are prime beneficiaries

The charitable contributions of [Barack Obama](#) and [Hillary Clinton](#) have received a fair amount of press scrutiny. The same is not true of John McCain, which is somewhat surprising since he is essentially the sole donor to the John and Cindy McCain Foundation, and his wife is its chairman and president.

Between 2001 and 2006, McCain contributed roughly \$950,000 to the foundation. That accounted for all of its listed income other than for \$100 that came from an anonymous donor. During that same period, the McCain foundation made contributions of roughly \$1.6 million. More than \$500,000 went to his kids' private schools, most of which was donated when his children were attending those institutions. So McCain apparently received major tax deductions for supporting elite schools attended by his children.

McCain has net assets of between \$20 million and \$32 million, making him [the seventh wealthiest member of the Senate](#). His wealth is tied to Cindy Hensley McCain, his second wife and heiress to Hensley & Co., a major Anheuser-Busch distributor.

McCain [has four children](#) with Cindy, all of whom attended prep schools in Arizona. [Meghan McCain](#), McCain's eldest child from his current marriage, [went to Xavier College Preparatory](#). McCain's foundation has given about \$50,000 to the school, mostly during Meghan's years there. Donations to Xavier have dropped off since Meghan graduated (in 2003 or 2004) and went on to Columbia University. For

2006, the foundation cut Xavier a check for just \$250.

McCain has two sons, Jim, who is now a private in the Marines, and Jack, who is attending the Naval Academy in Annapolis. Both previously attended [Brophy College Prep](#) in Phoenix, which received at least \$267,000 from the senator's foundation during the years that his sons were there.

The McCain foundation also donated money—roughly \$128,000—to Christ Lutheran School, which the McCain's 15-year-old adopted daughter, Bridget, and their son Jim both attended. In 2001, the foundation also donated \$41,667 to the Phoenix Country Day School, another elite prep school where both Meghan and Jack had been students.

Collectively, McCain's kids' private schools rank as the largest recipient of his foundation's money. The largest individual recipient is the U.S. Naval Academy Foundation, which received \$210,000 in both 2001 and 2002. That money was earmarked for conferences that “bring together key military officers and civilian academics responsible for ethics education and character developments.”

The McCain Foundation also has given large amounts to medical causes of various kinds, with a focus on craniofacial research, and the Halo Trust, a landmine-clearing organization. Small amounts have gone to the Valley Youth Theatre (\$200) in Phoenix; [Cool our Troops](#) (\$500), which provides Misty Mates to troops in Iraq; the Child Crisis Center in Phoenix (\$250), which provides emergency shelter and programs for abused kids; and the American Cancer Society's Neighborhood Cancer Program (\$50).

Between 2001 and 2002, the foundation contributed \$4,000 to Shannon Ulrich for “special needs education.” I'm not sure where Ullrich attended school at the time but she seems [to have later attended Bryn Mawr](#) and now [works for McCain's presidential campaign](#).

I contacted McCain's campaign to ask about the foundation's contributions. A campaign spokesman, who asked to speak anonymously, said the foundation is funded nearly entirely by proceeds from McCain's book sales. “These are schools that did great things for the McCains' kids and they felt it was appropriate to support them,” this person said.

It's impossible to know how much McCain has saved in taxes through his foundation's donations since he has thus far refused to release his tax returns (and [won't commit to releasing them](#) after formally becoming the nominee either).

There's nothing illegal or improper about the foundation's contributions, but it's not exactly the pattern of giving you'd expect from someone who has cultivated an anti-elitist image.

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This story was reported with help from Taimur Khan.