

Living

Out East
MAGAZINE

Philanthropy Issue



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Building the Foundations of Greatness

The Power of Philanthropy

Who are the faces of philanthropy in Sarasota and Manatee counties? Are they the high-profile and generous donors and heroes of community service such as the people on our cover who dedicate so much of their lives to making things better for others? Indeed, they are and our community is a far better place to live because many of those with huge resources choose to make huge gifts to others because they care. But they are also people like Brittany Najmy, a fifteen year old out east resident (also on our cover) who came up with the idea to raise money among her friends to support All Children's Hospital (which has an out east presence) and has raised \$15,000 to date and is still going.

Philanthropy has many faces. Certainly, we recognize the names and faces of those in our community, our country and the world who are leaders in sharing their resources and inspiring others to do the same.

But not all the faces of philanthropy belong to generous wealthy people or those who have a seat at the table in foundation board rooms. The faces of giving in our community belong to a diverse group of people from many walks of life and resource levels. They include those who give millions of dollars and thousands of hours and those who give a few dollars that represent a huge sacrifice in their lives. They include those who work long hours making a living and then donate additional hours to helping those who need help due to illness, joblessness or other causes of misfortune. The faces of philanthropy belong to the many among us who follow their hearts and passions by getting involved and giving to improve circumstances for others, the community and the planet.

They might be the faces of many of your neighbors. Or they might be the faces of those who give their time and volunteer their vehicles to deliver meals to shut-ins for Meals on Wheels Plus, the people who donate part of their modest salaries each check to United Way, the people who help feed the homeless, the people who donate to and volunteer to run thrift shops, the people who own or manage businesses of all sizes (from mom and pops to multinationals) who support worthy charities and maybe even you.

Even as public resources become less abundant in our era of shrinking government budgets, the needs of the poor and disadvantaged remain a constant, even rising obligation of society. As the safety net that a good society has to have to prosper over the long haul is less and less provided by tax dollars, those less fortunate among us can go into free fall and the unmet needs of society grow commensurately. In the face of all of this, we are fortunate that we can depend on a generous and caring private sector to take up the slack. Providing the time and resources to do what needs to be done to meet the legitimate and pressing social needs of the disadvantaged is the very essence of philanthropy. It is among the most important building blocks of a great community.

Young Ms. Najmy was right on the mark when she wrote, "It is important for our generation to understand the importance of fund raising and philanthropy so that not-for-profit organizations continue to support the needs of our community."

The truth is that it is important that not only do her teenage peers recognize the importance of helping others, it is important for all of us to understand that our lives and our society are based on a starkly simple bottom line: Many people need help and philanthropy is the engine that drives meeting the needs of those who are less fortunate when government will not or cannot provide. Philanthropy needs you and you need philanthropy if you want to be enriched by the satisfaction of making our community a better place to live. If you have a passion, give as much time, money or both as you can afford. The more you get involved, the more rewards our out east and community and our region and our world benefits.

--By Jeffrey R. Orenstein, Ph.D., Executive Editor



Carly Turner and Nicole Marcinic were volunteers at the recent Tropic Nights fundraiser for Meals on Wheels Plus



ManaTEENS – The Power of Kids With A Vision

ManaTEENS is the largest locally based teen volunteer initiative *in the nation* with thousands of teen volunteers contributing in excess of 1.7 million hours of service annually and the organization is right here in our community.

ManaTEENS was established in 1994 by two Bradenton teens named Laura Lockwood then 12 and Kat McKell then 17. The two sisters had a role model in their mother who was an active volunteer. Bored and looking for something to do, they recruited 20 friends and ManaTEENS was born. Today ManaTEENS is a countywide club for teens interested in volunteering with more than 14,000 active teens assisting 572 local agencies with volunteer needs. They create, implement, evaluate, sustain, and replicate 92 signature service programs.

The program is open to any youth 8-21 enrolled in public, private, alternative and charter elementary, middle, high school or college in Manatee County. Go to www.VolunteerManatee.org for an application. Service based scholarships are also available to graduating ManaTEENS.