

THE SECRET IS GIVING

April 19, 2013

Let me share a little secret about giving ... I give because it feels good.

By creating Bohemian Foundation, I have an extraordinary opportunity to financially support local nonprofits in the important work they do. However, I also get pleasure from spending a few hours swinging a hammer at Habitat for Humanity or spending a day playing hide-and-seek in the woods as a volunteer victim, crouched down and waiting quietly for in-training search and rescue dogs to sniff me out. I consider all these donations of time, talent and treasure, both big and small, meaningful.

Too often, philanthropy is seen as a check-writing practice, something done only by the wealthy. But this is a myth, especially in Fort Collins. According to *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* in a special report released last year titled "How America Gives," middle-income households donate a bigger share of their disposable income each year to charity than the wealthy. In addition, the report shows us that households in Fort Collins gave \$82.5 million to charity in 2008, ranking the city an impressive 173 out of more than 11,500 cities studied. While that's a strong sign of our community's commitment to helping others, it doesn't tell the whole story.

From small acts to large financial gifts, there is a social value to giving that can't be easily measured. Sharing a smile or opening the door for a stranger only costs you a few seconds. Buying coffee for the person standing behind you in line requires a couple of dollars, if you have it to spare. It might inspire that person to pay it forward in their own way to someone else.

And did I mention that giving feels good?

We can rethink and redefine the whole concept of giving in our community. Everyone, regardless of socioeconomic status or age, can touch the lives of others in positive

ways. The reality is that each of us has the ability to live generously even though we might differ in *how* and *how much* we give. In Fort Collins, we are building a culture of giving.

We see evidence of it all around us.

More and more local employers like OtterBox and New Belgium look beyond profits to make philanthropy and social responsibility an integral part of their business models. "Give Next" is a new program by United Way of Larimer County and Bohemian Foundation being piloted in five Poudre School District middle and high schools. The program, which also is supported by several other local businesses and foundations, is designed to educate students about the vital role of nonprofits and philanthropy. The Colorado Nonprofit Association recently singled out the *Coloradoan* among dozens of news outlets across the state to receive its Excellence in Media Award for the newspaper's "Causes" reporting. CommunityFunded.com has created new opportunities for impactful micro-giving at the community level through its social funding website.

And that's just the tip of the iceberg.

The power of philanthropy comes from the impact of many individuals investing in their community in whatever way they can, whether that's ten dollars, ten hours of volunteering, or ten acts of kindness. If we rethink philanthropy, everyone can find a meaningful way to be included.

So, I challenge you to give because it feels good and because you can.

Live generously and give everyday,

Pat Stuyk

Founder, Bohemian Foundation

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