

Philanthropy Corner – June 20, 2010
“Fathers and Philanthropy”
Dianna L. Sutton

Children often look up to their fathers as heroes. They look to them for advice and they serve as role models. In the sense of community, one of the best lessons a father can teach a child to carry forward in life is the concept of philanthropy. The concept of bettering the world we all inhabit through philanthropy is a learned behavior, a lesson learned from one's role model. One often looks at philanthropy as an untouchable world, a place where only the rich have the time or resources to reside, but you don't have to be rich to be a philanthropist. Teaching children the benefits of giving unselfishly everyday toward the good of mankind as an “Everyday Philanthropist” has the potential to make a genuine difference.

Many of us have heard about some famous fathers who are engaging in philanthropy on the grand scale. Deemed the “Father of Global Philanthropy,” Bill Gates is utilizing his fortune to powerfully tackle the issues of disease, hunger and poverty in the world through The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Initially funded by Bill Gates with \$106 million in 2000 and endowed with \$28.8 billion in 2006, Gates has not only used his wealth and influence to take a stand for humanity, but has also passed on this legacy for his three children to carry forward.

Paul Newman has been called the “Father of Consumer Philanthropy” because he proved that when Americans are given a choice between a high-quality product and a high quality product coupled with the chance to do good, they are inclined to choose the latter. Newman established a policy that all proceeds after taxes from his Newman's Own food products would be donated to charity, and since 1982 over \$290 million has been distributed. One beneficiary of his philanthropy is the Hole in the Wall Gang Camp, a residential summer camp for seriously ill children which serves 13,000 children every year free of charge. Newsman's daughter, Nell Newman, has taken on her late father's work to ensure the continuation of her father's impactful philanthropy.

The Florida Keys has its own rich history of philanthropic role models dating back to the late 1800s. Most prominent in the socio-economic development of Key West was cigar factory owner Eduardo Gato who was a philanthropist from his arrival in Key West in 1874. He is well-known for building “Gatoville,” a village for his 500 workers and their families. Even when the local cigar business collapsed, he was one of the last factories to close and gave both his money and time to the community. When he returned to Cuba, he donated his home to the people of Key West to be used as a hospital.

Though the faces of historical philanthropic figures like Gato can be seen at the memorial Sculpture Garden in Mallory Square, more recent local philanthropists are keeping the tradition of philanthropy prevalent in our community. We have our own local “Fathers of Philanthropy,” such as Community Foundation of the Florida Keys founding Chairman Ed Block and founder Ray Baker. John Padget continues to be instrumental in the

growth of the “Take Stock In Children” program that benefits Monroe County and international youth. Edward B. Knight’s patronage has benefited many causes within our community, most especially the Boy Scouts and Camp Sawyer on West Summerland Key.

Likewise, ensuring the higher education of many students with college scholarships has been a passion for locals such as Boyd Hamilton whose sons Danny and Henry are not only carrying on their father’s legacy, but are now teaching the importance of giving back to the community to their children. The legacy of Key West High School volunteer teacher Ross McKee continues thanks to the lessons he brought to students and the impact of his scholarship fund at the Community Foundation. David Wolkowsky provides financial awards to teachers who strive towards educational excellence. Harold Murphy and Fred Klaus created a foundation to care for the indigent, needy and poor in Key West well beyond their lifetimes. In addition to these “fathers of philanthropy” mentioned here, there are many more examples of how everyday philanthropists are serving as role models with no expectation other than to make our community a better place to live.

It’s important that we take time today to recognize and honor fathers and role models in our lives who have positively impacted our lives and our community. One way to show your appreciation is to make a charitable donation in their name to a societal cause that is important to them. On behalf of our community, The Community Foundation of the Florida Keys thanks all the fathers and role models who instill the value and concept of philanthropy.

Dianna L. Sutton is a national certified fundraising executive with more than twenty years of fundraising and nonprofit management. She is currently President and CEO of the Community Foundation of the Florida Keys. She can be contacted at dsutton@cffk.org.