



PHILANTHROPY FIRST!!!

Many of us, over the years, have practiced philanthropy by giving to numerous charitable endeavors to help support causes we believe are important. We have been touched by something or someone, either personally or through a significant other and, therefore, reached into our pocket, wrote a check or volunteered to help support that cause or concern. And each time we have done so, what we did was commit an act of charity, giving in to our philanthropic impulse.

However, those of us who work to development resources for nonprofit organizations (as professionals or volunteers) may find ourselves losing sight of the essence of philanthropy in our quest to raise the "almighty dollars". So let's take a look at what philanthropy is about...

The word "Philanthropy" is derived from the Greek word meaning "Love of mankind (humankind)". Another, "Voluntary action for the common good" I have often thought of as a working definition, attributed to the Center for Philanthropy at Indiana University. Still another comes from Webster's dictionary, "a desire to help mankind", while Roget's Thesaurus uses such words as charity, benevolence, good will, public-spiritedness, humanitarianism, and altruism to describe this noun.

Henry David Thoreau has said "Philanthropy is almost the only virtue which is sufficiently appreciated by mankind", leaving us to philosophically ponder the relationship of excellence and charitable giving.

Marie Curie had this to say, "You cannot hope to build a better world without improving the individuals. To that end each of us must work for their own improvement, and at the same time share a general responsibility for all humanity, our particular duty being to aid those to whom we think we can be most useful".

A contemporary colleague, Robert L. Payton has said, "Philanthropy requires thought, action and passion". Robert Bremmer, yet another contemporary colleague who authored the book *American Philanthropy*, has said, "The common ingredient of both charity and philanthropy is love..."; he sees charity as seeking to palliate misfortune while philanthropy aims to prevent and correct social ills.

To me, philanthropy is not just a "9 to 5" commitment; it's a way of approaching life, of trying to make a difference in the lives of those we encounter. Aside from voting, philanthropy gives us the opportunity to express a meaningful choice over the direction in which our community, our society, and our world will progress.

Most importantly, for those of us who work in the field of philanthropy as professionals and volunteers, philanthropy gives us the privilege to do something everyday to help people.

Since 1980, when I first entered the field of philanthropy, I have endeavored to focus on responsible resource development by keeping in mind that at its very best, philanthropy unites us in caring relationships that enrich both the giver and receiver. Keeping this in the forefront as our own personal mission will do much to sustain us as we seek to advance the missions of the institutions we serve. Let's think "Philanthropy First!"

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