

MONEY WELL SPENT: KEEPING OUR COMMUNITY STRONG IN UNCERTAIN TIMES



Now, more than ever, nonprofits need our generosity



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by Marjory Kaplan

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While the economic recession presents major challenges, it also gives us opportunities to keep our community stable and strong.

Through 600 donor advised funds and family foundations, the Jewish Community Foundation distributes more

grants than any other foundation in San Diego County – \$67 million last year.

In the current recession, we are encouraging the families who associate with us to be as generous as possible. Givers of all backgrounds can use this time as an opportunity to think about how they give and take action.

How do you maximize your giving in difficult economic times? Here are some basic principles:

- **Focus:** Identify the causes or organizations most closely aligned to your values. Support those that are serving the community effectively.
- **Give More When the Need is Greatest:** Consider that this might be the absolute best time to give. We all face financial hurdles, yet the most vulnerable in our community are facing life-threatening needs. Jewish Family Service of San Diego and the United Jewish Federation of San Diego County are reaching out to those who lose jobs, health insurance, even homes. Single mothers, the working poor, seniors on fixed income, Holocaust survivors – so

many in our community are affected. Beyond social services, other needs can't be overlooked. Our Jewish day schools report vastly increased requests for financial aid from families who have been able to pay year after year. Many synagogues are facing budget challenges at a time when community is more important than ever. Jewish after-school and preschool programs as well as summer camps need additional support for scholarships. And we must not overlook those under attack in Israel.

All Jewish nonprofits are concerned that giving levels will decrease along with their ability to serve the community.

- **Invest in Sustainability:** Think about your favorite organizations and what it will take to keep the lights on, maintain staff, and use technology to provide core services. The most valuable grant to a nonprofit may simply be for general operations.
- **Collaborate and Advocate:** Advocate to friends and associates about giving as a group to causes that are important to you. Use your voice as well as your checkbook.
- **Communicate:** Most nonprofits are receiving fewer contributions than they had counted on, making planning difficult. If you care about an organization, tell them about your giving plans.

Last year, the Jewish Community Foundation recorded its strongest year ever with 5,000 grants awarded to nonprofits in San Diego County and beyond. Our annual report and Web site are filled with stories of our generous donors and outstanding community organizations making a difference in this community and

around the world.

But this year, like everyone else, the Foundation has been challenged by the economic downturn.

Our response is to keep a clear focus on our mission to support a strong and vibrant Jewish and general community. We are holding honest, deep discussions with many of our 600 donors to see how they can give when the needs are greatest. We're offering an incentive to fortify charitable giving: a matching grant program for new donor advised funds that matches contributions to Jewish organizations. And we recently convened more than 100 leaders from 32 organizations, schools and synagogues to share best practices about how to respond to the economic times.

The Jewish people have faced adversity for thousands of years. We've become experts in using creativity and innovation coupled with a genuine desire to improve the world to bring about positive change and opportunity. This time is no different. Our community faces serious and significant needs, yet together we can weather this storm.

The Foundation is the largest grant maker in San Diego. Awarding more than \$67 million last year:

- 5,000 grants to
- 1,200 organizations in areas such as education, arts and health
- in San Diego, the U.S., Israel and worldwide

Jewish Community Foundation
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