



The Creative Nature of Philanthropy

Imagine a world in which each of us gives both our time and financial resources to causes that benefit society as an artistic expression of our passions. What would that really mean to each of us and to the lives we touch along the way?

Artistic expression comes out of the creative process, a process that often begins when an individual explores personally significant values and beliefs, issues and concerns and then searches for a medium to express those ideas. The expression, whether through canvas and paint, musical instrument or architectural design, makes an important statement about that individual and, at the same time, makes an impact on those who are exposed to the "end product" of that artistic expression. *Thus, through the creative process, the emotive vision of the "artist" leads to the creation of a valued product.*

So, too, in philanthropy we can be moved to action by first defining that which is important to us. What emotionally moves us: children, the elderly, the homeless; education, healthcare, the arts? Then by funneling our energies into causes that best express our "emotive vision" we find the means of creating valued products (food for the hungry, workplace training, shelters for victims of domestic violence, a new concert hall) that can be appreciated by our "audiences".

The word philanthropy conjures many different thoughts. Literally translated, the word means "love of mankind"; another often-quoted definition says "voluntary action for the public good". For some it means the ability to give a great deal of money to a cause and receive public recognition for this contribution; others might see it as volunteering one's time and talents to help a nonprofit, charitable agency. But for me the significance of philanthropy is much broader -- embracing any and all public-spirited aspects of society that are dedicated to working altruistically for the positive benefit of humankind. *And approaching philanthropy as a creative work in progress will not only benefit those whose lives are thusly touched but also excite and energize us to do yet more good in this 21st Century.*

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