

The Next Generation of Philanthropists, part II ©

Eva Marer , CFA

Preteens and teens have a world of heart and wisdom to share. As part of a national trend, parents, schools, and community foundations are recognizing the importance of training teens for a lifetime of giving.

By age 11, most kids will have picked up the philanthropic values of their families, says Barbara Steinmetz, CFP, of Steinmetz Financial in Burlingame, California. "By that age, kids should understand the family's giving mission as well as some basic financial concepts. They should know how to budget an allowance-with money set aside for spending, saving, and giving," says Steinmetz, who has taught financial planning in public high schools. "They should have a savings account and know how to manage a passbook. Ideally they should already be active in community service."

In order to impart such values to their kids, parents need to evaluate their own relationship to money and giving. "There are an awful lot of parents who want their kids to develop responsibility for wealth, yet they themselves, especially baby boomers, may have missed out on this training," says Rick Love, vice president and senior philanthropic advisor with Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors in New York. Love suggests there are two angles to family philanthropy: the intergenerational issue, which explores what is important to the family and establishes a legacy of giving; and the social need to develop future adults who are capable of serving the community as a whole.

Any Volunteers?

As kids enter their teenage years, service opportunities abound. "The idea of youth as grant makers has caught on like wildfire," says Janet Wakefield, executive director of Community Partnerships with Youth (CPY) in Fort Wayne, Indiana (<http://www.cpyinc.org>). This national organization teaches trusteeship, governance, and philanthropy primarily to children 11 to 18 years old.

Wakefield explains that the National Assembly of Health and Human Service Organizations (an association of national nonprofit organizations) has made it a priority to put youth on boards of charities and community foundations, especially for groups that serve youth. "Many of these organizations actually serve young people, and yet no one is there to represent them. When you put kids at the table, something amazing occurs. It's evident that they care, they have time, they are creative, they have dollars, and they influence an incredible amount of money," she says. In many community foundations and local charities, teens can now sit on boards, make grant recommendations, volunteer, and offer technical skills such as managing budgets, writing grants, and reporting on funds.

Learning through School Programs

Another growing avenue for teen philanthropy is the schools. For example, CPY has created "The Littlest Philanthropists," a program in Indiana that sends teenagers into third-grade classrooms and gives each

class \$100 to spend in the community. The children and teens start by discussing "What is a community?" and then begin to look at the needs of their own community and the causes they care about. "This is really a lesson on trusteeship," Wakefield says. "Trusteeship is heart plus leadership, and from there, how best to develop your skills to serve."

The Council of Michigan Foundations (CMF) is a leader in the area of school training. CMF collaborated with the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University to develop the Learning to Give program, a comprehensive K12 curriculum that teaches philanthropy in the schools. In Michigan, 33 "pilot schools" use the curriculum at every level, and nationally, at least 87,000 students have benefited from at least part of the training, says Kathy Agard, executive director of the program. Thousands of teachers have attended seminars sponsored by CMF or have learned via distance learning. Every lesson is field-tested by at least three teachers and is available for free on the Web (<http://www.cmif.org/>).

Many schools, churches, and private groups also offer summer internship programs to serve the community or even travel abroad to take up philanthropic work in poorer nations. Steinmetz believes that high-school-age children should have summer jobs or internships to learn the value of work.

Other Resources for Teen Philanthropists

For his clients who do not receive such training in school, Love brings in outside advisors to teach financial skills and philanthropy to children or grandchildren, often during private family foundation meetings. He notes that many wealthy families who do not have a family foundation can borrow the concept of the once-a-year family meeting to discuss philanthropic goals. Donors can go to their local community foundation for guidance in setting up a family meeting or for other family philanthropy resources.

A wealth of information about teens and philanthropy is also available on the Web. The Council on Foundations (<http://www.cof.org>) offers information, publications, and seminars around the country to help families with their giving. The National Center for Family Philanthropy (<http://www.ncfp.org/>) helps families and individuals create and sustain their philanthropic mission, regardless of the vehicle. Resource Generation (<http://www.resourcegeneration.org>), a Cambridge, Massachusetts-based organization that promotes social responsibility among affluent young adults, offers national workshops, local dinners, conference calls, and other publications and resources to help wealthy teens explore the role of money in social justice. And Girls Inc. (<http://www.girlsinc.org>), a 140-year-old national nonprofit dedicated to empowering young girls and women, runs a money management program for girls ages 6 to 18 at 1,000 sites nationwide.

Preteens and teens are perfectly primed to develop giving habits for life. "Philanthropy is about knowing who you are, what you care about, what treasures you have to offer, and how you can move out to offer those unique gifts to the world," Wakefield says. In her opinion, teens bring a freshness and sincerity to the giving process that even adults can learn from.

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