



By Tasha Phelps

The ART of Philanthropy

The American Heritage Dictionary defines *philanthropy* (fi-lan thre-pe)n. as:

“1. The effort to increase the well-being of humankind, as by charitable donations. 2. Love of humankind in general.”¹

For decades, men and women of Indianapolis have privately (and independently) shouldered the financial responsibility of charities in the community. In today’s unprecedented economic position, trends suggest that corporations are also attempting to shoulder more of the responsibility by getting more significantly involved. Wikipedia, an online encyclopedia resource, notes that “during the past few years, philanthropy has become more mainstream, owing in part to the high profile of rock star Bono’s campaign to cancel Third World debt to developed nations (and) the Gates Foundation’s massive resources and ambitions.”

The “art” of giving can also be a family event. It certainly doesn’t have to be driven by celebrities, or high-powered business persons like Bono or Bill Gates. Many families have decided to work together to give back to charities, and have done so in different ways. In a recent conversation with Shawna Rice, Case Manager at the Wheeler Mission Care Center, she recalled a personal experience with her son. Shawna shared that it was breath-taking to see her 11-year-old son’s response, when he was asked to help out with a food and blanket drive for Wheeler Mission. The benefits were undoubtedly of benefit for all involved – both the volunteer and the recipient.

Locally, many of the corporate “superstars” have been responsive by setting up several initiatives to maintain a supportive arm in the charitable community. The Gransmanship Center (www.tgci.com) has identified several corporations in Indianapolis that have specific corporate giving programs in place:

Corporation Name	City of Headquarters
American United Life Insurance Company (AUL)	Indianapolis
BSA LifeStructures	Indianapolis
Dow AgroSciences LLC	Indianapolis
Eli Lilly and Company	Indianapolis
Gene B. Glick Company, Inc.	Indianapolis
Indianapolis Colts	Indianapolis
IPALCO Enterprises, Inc.	Indianapolis
Marsh Supermarkets, Inc.	Indianapolis
Pacers Sports & Entertainment	Indianapolis
Standard Management Corporation (SMC)	Indianapolis
The Finish Line, Inc.	Indianapolis
WellPoint, Inc.	Indianapolis



(Continued from page 1)

The beauty of it all, is that *giving* is not pre-defined. *Giving* is just as Wikipedia suggested – DOING because one has the love of humankind. It is evident that many corporations seem to understand that the balance for making corporate **sales** is corporate **service**.

Sherma Wise Thomas, owner of The Media Wise Companies, also notes, that *giving* is part of the framework of a community. As a media specialist, and a veteran in the industry, she has taken upon herself to highlight some of the activities the phenomenal citizens of the Indianapolis community are doing. She's spent a significant amount of time working on highlighting the charitable activities within the Indianapolis community, and developed a web portal that does just that. Her web portal "Purpose and Style" (www.purposeandstyle.net) is home to the "Insiders look at those who celebrate our charitable efforts by raising funds and have fun doing it."²

Often times for employees, the barrier to being able to donate time or money is getting time off work. The BEST approach to achieving the goal is to get the businesses and corporations involved. When the business or corporation is involved, often times, there are policies that grant additional time off to the employee to participate in charitable activities. Some corporations have even gone so far as to implement a matching gift program, where any financial contributions made by the employees to an approved charity, are matched (usually up to a certain amount) by the employer.

In the end, what is most important to remember, is that the "ART" of giving is not a design, a sculpture, or poetic. It is simply an affect of the heart and a social responsibility that everyone endures.

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