

## Women in Philanthropy Panel – GIJP Camp Conference

### Lessons learned for camps from candid interviews with women philanthropists - Sue Kline

In preparing for this session, I did a considerable amount of reading – Sondra Shaw Hardy and Martha Taylor’s book 2010 Women & Phil and many articles. I was interested in current research about the differences in men’s and women’s motivations for giving. Men, it seems, tend to give for more superficial reasons – to compete with peers, to get their names on a wall, to play in an exclusive golf tournament – and are more likely to give to preserve venerable institutions – hospitals, museums, universities. Women philanthropists eschew superficial reasons for giving; they want to do the 6 C’s to create and change and connect and commit and collaborate and celebrate.

Whether or not, this giving description is accurate (suggesting that men are “wired” differently than women) for our purposes today it was more important to concentrate specifically on what was said about women. So I decided to conduct my own unofficial research project.

I selected five women whom I know to be thoughtfully philanthropic and scheduled conversations with each of them answering questions about how they became philanthropic, what passions drove them, whether personal volunteering was integral to their giving, what role husbands played in decision making, whether they thought they went about their philanthropic decisions differently from men, what they hoped to accomplish during their lifetime through their philanthropy.

The women were all in their 50s and 60s, 4 in Western Mass and one in Boston. Four were married, one single. Three worked. All were leaders at some level; three were recent or current presidents of Jewish organizations.

These turned out to be fascinating and sometimes surprising conversations. My subjects enjoyed talking about their philanthropy as much as I enjoyed listening. And now I’d like to share what I heard, condensing my learning into **5 insights** that could impact camps as they fundraise with women in mind.

**One:** Whether they had independent incomes, were supported by their husbands or were single, **all five women said they were the ones who drove the philanthropic decisions.** two felt their husbands simply didn’t care as much; the 3rd said her husband was simply too busy; the single woman made her own decisions The 5th referred to having to negotiate with her husband – who had his own giving agenda -- but she said he always listened to her wishes and ultimately agreed. So whether or not men give to different organization on their own is really not an issue. The women hold the decisive card.

**With this in mind, camp leadership and development staff are missing an opportunity unless they meet with women or husbands and wives together.**

**Two: Women are nurturers, and they are motivated by causes that fulfill that instinct. They** all said something like this –“Of course, women are nurturers so I like to give to women and children, education, social services...those causes resonate with me.”

One example of giving of this type was actually initiated by the husband, who was moved to commit the largest gift the couple had ever given to build a state-of-the-art playground at the JCC in honor of his wife’s significant birthday. He was acknowledging her passion for serving the needs of all children in the community, especially poor children and children with special needs. **Jewish camp seems like a natural philanthropic source of interest, even passion, for the nurturing Jewish woman...who might indeed mark a life cycle event with a gift.**

Now one philanthropist said, “I’m a nurturer, true, but I when I give to help the poor, the abused, the homeless, I consider that to be charity. I’m not going to change a cycle – I’m just relieving individual suffering. On the other hand, I look at my philanthropy as an *investment*. I think my money is best spent in nurturing children through day school education – children who develop to maturity with strong Jewish values –they have a chance of changing the world. Really changing it. **That philanthropist, as much as or even more than the other, could no doubt be influenced by understanding the impact of Jewish camp in engaging children in Jewish life and thereby strongly impacting Jewish continuity.**

**Three: Women also made it clear that they give when they are personally impacted.** A woman whose 4<sup>th</sup> child was born severe special needs now makes that her primary cause. Prior to her child’s birth, she had never supported children w special needs.

Another whose daughter was successfully treated for a serious eating disorder through a local hospital now funds an educational program at the hospital because her family will be eternally grateful -- even though she admitted that it would never have been in her plan to give the hospital a major gift. Personal impact is critical. **Clearly, camp fundraisers should do the research to identify those cases where potential donor was personally impacted by Jewish camp.**

**Four: Relationship with an effective leader is sometimes the impetus for giving.**

While we often say that women’s volunteer involvement usually precedes significant giving – and that is probably true -- I also saw that the spur to give can come from a positive relationship with an institutional leader. One woman exuded enthusiasm about AIPAC, “I love the executive director – he’s effective, he keeps in touch, comes to visit, makes sure we are invited to high level events. I don’t have to personally volunteer to know that I want to support that important organization. **So as fundraisers – camp directors, development staff, recognize the need for relationship-building rather than transaction-based fundraising (in which the number of contacts is valued over the quality of the contacts.) Gifts from women –or from couples where women drive the decisions – may take longer but the results can be very worthwhile.**”

**Five:** It is true that while they don’t need recognition, **women really want to celebrate.**

Giving is serious –but they must feel good have fun doing it –a sense of “joie de vivre,” said one. Another woman commented that when she wasn’t having fun she stopped giving. She had been included in a Jewish women’s event because of the level of her gift, but felt ignored and a definite “outsider” at the event itself. The cause was good but she herself didn’t feel good.

Another interviewee, the current president of a major federation’s women’s division - said that she was changing the culture and making her 2-year stint fun and engaging – “We’re all in this together,” she said. Because the women are doing serious good and having fun, their giving has increased significantly. Conclusion - **Jewish camp is fun – and camps could continue to find new and creative ways to celebrate with alumni, families and donors not only when camp is in session but throughout the year.**

**To make the most out of your interactions with women philanthropists:**

- ✓ **When you meet with couples, pay lots of attention to the woman.**
- ✓ **Position Jewish camp as nurturing all children and as a pillar in engaging the next generation of knowledgeable and caring individuals through whom Jewish continuity can be ensured.**
- ✓ **Identify the personal impact of Jewish camp on the donor.**
- ✓ **Take the time to build a relationship with the donor and achieve high respect; avoid thinking of the “ask” as a transaction.**
- ✓ **Create and embrace opportunities to celebrate.**