

Why We Give

By Kris Grant

This holiday season, we asked a handful of locals to tell us why they give. In each case, we've found their philosophy toward philanthropy to be both simple and yet profound. We hope you come away inspired to make a difference now — and as a continuing practice for years to come.

Paying it forward

Mike and Linda Dorn have funded a redesign of the entrance and parking lot including landscape and hardscape to Sharp Coronado Hospital and the new drop off at the Payne Family Outpatient Pavilion on Soledad Road. The Dorns have also provided annual funding for 55 parking spaces at the Marriott Coronado Island Resort for hospital employees as



Mike and Linda Dorn (center with gold shovels) are joined by (from left) Coronado Councilmember Carrie Downey, Sharp Coronado CEO Susan Stone and Mayor Casey Tanaka at the groundbreaking of Sharp Coronado Hospital's entrance redesign, which was funded by the Dorns.

well as valet parking for hospital patients and visitors. Among many other causes, they've been major donors to Rotary Club of Coronado's End Polio Now annual wine tasting and auction. Mike Dorn was afflicted with polio as a young man and while paralyzed and in the hospital, promised God he would spend the rest of his life working to help others if he could live and perhaps walk again.

God was listening. Mike kept his promise, and Linda and the Dorn children have joined him in the joy of giving and being of service to others.

Linda added, "The motivation for me came from seeing the movie *Pay It Forward*. It's a phenomenal movie that changed me in a lot of ways."

The Dorns, who were living in Monterey when the movie came out, began funding four-year scholarships at California State University Monterey Bay. "Part of the requirement for a student who received a scholarship was that they, too, needed to pay it forward," Linda explained. "Perhaps helping younger students through the Boys & Girls Club or through First Tee, a program that works with kids from ages 5 through 18, teaching them not only golf, but manners, social skills and life skills."

After the Dorns had funded about 10 four-year scholarships, they were joined by others. Now the Pay It Forward scholarships are numbering in the hundreds, many of them going to lower-income students in the Salinas area.

"We like to see the results of what our money can do," said Mike. "Seeing the results is gratifying."

Likewise, they've encouraged their children to give of time and money. "We told them we didn't want any more gifts," said Linda. "We prefer they contribute to a charity or a family or volunteer for a cause and then just type up what they



Dr. Joe Mullins' philanthropy focuses on Coronado schools.

did and give that to us as our Christmas present. And those notes have been just the best."

The ultimate gift

"My wife, Condra, and I give for one simple reason — the kids," said Dr. Joe Mullins. "This is our opportunity to change the world — to instill the proper values in our children and provide them with the best education possible."

Chief among the Mullins' philanthropic schedule is the Coronado Schools Foundation, both as monetary backers and as volunteers. Condra has been the Schools Foundation auction co-chair, and Mullins Orthodontics is a business partner with the foundation. Through his orthodontics practice, Joe



Spiro Chaconas welcomed fellow Rotarians at a recent happy hour gathering at Spiro's Greek Cafe.

also continually supports the Village and Strand PTOs, Coronado SAFE, Islander Sports Foundation, Coronado School of the Arts, girls softball, boys' Little League and cheerleading squads.

"We give because we have been given so much. Condra and I are so blessed with great families that have always supported us," Joe said. "In my childhood neighborhood, Washington Lands in Moundville, W.Va., you took care of your neighbors and community and they took care of you."

Today, Joe is scoutmaster of Coronado Boy Scout Troop 801 and Condra (who has served as a room mother, parent volunteer, Harvest Hoedown and Art Auction organizer) is vice president of the middle school PTO.

"Giving of your time can be one of life's most rewarding experiences," Joe said. "I want my boys to learn that giving back is the ultimate gift, and the reason we are here on this earth. Give what you can, give your time and always help out your community."

Making wishes come true

It's coming up on the annual Thanksgiving community luncheon at St. Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church in San Diego, and once again all the turkeys will be donated by Spiro's Greek Café. The Chaconas family has been an active donor and backer of the church and Nancy is active with its women's auxiliary, Philoptochos, which translates from Greek to "friends of the poor." The group conducts quarterly feeding-the-homeless outreach programs in San Diego and also gives to kids with cancer, Habitat for Humanity and many more causes.

Once a year, Spiro's Greek Café sets aside 20 percent of the day's profits to give to Make A Wish Foundation. The Make a Wish Foundation grants terminally ill children their biggest wish. "Sometimes it's a trip to Disneyworld and other times it's just meeting their favorite Padre," said Spiro. "And when Make a Wish grants a wish, it includes the entire family. That's important."

Family is of utmost importance to Spiro and Nancy, and Spiro says with pride “we are especially proud of our children, Michael and Demetri, and that’s why we give to the Coronado Schools Foundation.” Spiro has served as a board member and president and both Spiro and Nancy have been active supporters of the foundation. “Both our boys are in college now and without our great school system, I don’t think they would have been so prepared for Point Loma Nazarene University and UCLA,” he said.

As Spiro welcomed a group of fellow Rotarians to his cafe for a midweek happy hour fellowship, he observed, “I think it’s important to give to my community because this community gives a lot to me.”

The Chaconases have donated to many other Coronado causes, among them Rotary Foundation, Coronado



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Bob and Patty Payne are major underwriters of the new Payne Family Outpatient Pavilion at Sharp Coronado Hospital.

SAFE and the Coronado Hospital Foundation, and Spiro makes one over-arching promise: “As long as I’ve got it, I’ll give it.”

It’s payback time!

“There comes a time later in life when you have the opportunity to give back to your community to express your gratitude for all that you have been blessed with,” said Bob Payne, who was born in National City and raised in San Diego. “And my wife, Patty, was born right on Orange Avenue and raised in Coronado. Her family roots go back to 1924 when her grandparents moved to Coronado”

The Payne’s major funding of the Payne Family Outpatient Pavilion (now under construction at Sharp Coronado Hospital) was in recognition of Patty’s long family history in Coronado and Bob’s knowledge of health care — he is a former chairman of the board of the entire Sharp Healthcare system. “It was

clear to me that for the simple survival of the hospital we needed expanded services,” he said.

“Why do we give?” Bob said rhetorically, “To sum it up: it’s payback time!”

Yet philanthropy wasn’t a familiar concept in his formative years. “I wasn’t even aware that people gave much in the environment that I grew up in,” he said. “But by my 40s, I was enjoying a career in the hospitality industry. I owned a chain of restaurants and built a Hilton hotel and a Crown Plaza Hotel in Mission Valley. I became affiliated with the Boys & Girls Club in San Diego and that got me going. It gave me the opportunity to see that giving was the thing to do.

“I made a decision a long time ago that I would split my philanthropic energies among health care, education and youth,” Bob said. “Now we’re involved with several philanthropic programs with San Diego State, plus others

including the Boys & Girls Clubs and Junior Achievement.

“You go through a period where you think, ‘I should put these things in my will.’ But then you have the realization, ‘Why not give things away while we’re still living? Why not feel the pride and the joy and see the results of your giving?’”

The circle of giving

Bob and Gail Bardin split their time between Coronado and San Marino, near Pasadena, and they have been equally generous donors to and participants in charitable causes in both places.

One of their passions has been helping foster-care children, which in San Moreno they have done through the Department of Children and Family Services. In San Diego, they’ve donated to San Pasqual Academy; most recently gifting an electric car to the boarding high school for foster students.

They also like to support causes that enrich the cultural fabric of life in a community: in San Marino, they donate to the Huntington Library and California Institute of Technology in Pasadena; in Coronado they support Coronado Historical Association and are Patron-level donors to the Coronado Island Film Festival.

When asked, “Why not save your money to be able to pass on a sizeable inheritance?” Bob is quick to answer: “We want to set a good example for our kids. We don’t want them to be stingy! When they are older and have the where-withal, they can donate financially. Before then, they can give of their time.”

Gail said their longtime housekeeper, Maria, who lives in Chula Vista, regularly collects clothing to take to needy families in Tijuana. “She has

taken my daughter, Amy, with her and it’s been a wonderful experience for her. Maria rounded up clothes and Amy gave school supplies.”

“We got to know Maria and her family well,” Bob continued. “One of her sons is



Bob and Gail Bardin have a passion for helping foster children and funding cultural programs that enrich a community’s lifestyle.

a student at Chico State, and he’s a good kid. We decided to help him out with his rent obligation for the school year.”

“So it’s a circle,” said Gail. “Maria helps those in need in Tijuana, and we want to help her family.”

“Giving is not so much about income level as it is about attitude,” Bob added. ★