

Giving spirits assist Center on Philanthropy

The Center on Philanthropy helps professionals help nonprofits help others.

Date: July 29, 2008

Duration: 4:54

Transcript

[G. Temple] The Center on Philanthropy started in 1987 based on some studies we'd done in '85 and '86 that really came out of a concern for the future of the philanthropic tradition in the U.S. So when we started the Center, one of the things that we were concerned with was the notion that philanthropy played an important part in the development of this country and that people may be losing that, or may have been losing that tradition at the time. There was a decline in volunteerism, there was a decline in church attendance, mainline churches in the U.S., and those--the churches were some of the places where the philanthropic tradition had been taught. As younger people were losing the philanthropic tradition, in terms of volunteerism, there was a real concern that something might be lost.

[T. Seiler] And now, of course, the Center has expanded well beyond the School. We have a first class research program, first class academic program, MA degrees, PhD degrees. We have the Lake Institute on Faith and Giving, we have the Millennium Institute studying new leadership among people of color and youth and women. We have the Women's Philanthropy Institute. We just have so many programs here at the Center on Philanthropy and as we celebrate our 20th anniversary, we're really a comprehensive center. We're really unlike any other center that I know of that studies the field of philanthropy and fundraising and nonprofit management.

[P. Rooney] We have a number of projects that are national, like the Center on Philanthropy panel study, where we track the same 8,000 households every other year, through a survey that we're doing in a partnership with the University of Michigan's panel study of income dynamics. They survey the same 8,000 families every other year going back to 1968, so this is our signature research project and we think this is very cool, because it will allow fundraisers and nonprofit managers to understand about philanthropy, not only today, but looking back historically, what are some predictors of philanthropic behavior, so for example, did their parents' philanthropic behaviors, did they serve as predictors of their adult children's philanthropic behaviors today and in the future. Did a childhood divorce have a positive or negative impact on someone's philanthropy when they become an adult? Did a period of dependence on welfare or unemployment insurance have an impact on their philanthropy? No other study can help us do that in any meaningful way, so this is a powerful study and we're very excited about this.

[A. Pactor] Women have traditionally be involved as volunteers, giving of their time and talent, and the great joy of the 20th century and 21st century, is that women have assets and access to assets in ways they've never had before, particularly in this country. The purpose of the Women's Philanthropy Institute is really very unique in this whole field. Our job is to provide the foundation for understanding how philanthropy can affect social change. Once women are engaged strategically in philanthropy, that they will unleash the resources that statistics would indicate that women will have and that will be able to affect the world in whatever way they choose.

[T. Seiler] The fundraising school is a training program--I equate it to continuing education--we don't grant degrees. Mostly it's professional fundraiser staff, and sometimes board members, who are in nonprofit organizations--they come to our workshops, which range from one day in length to five days in length--to learn how to organize and manage effective fundraising programs.

[G. Temple] There is in fact a growing awareness of people--media, the public in general, legislators--about philanthropy. It's become a much larger segment of society than it was before. Employment growth continues to outpace business and government in the nonprofit sector. There are 75,000 private foundations today, there were only 22,000 in 1980. The interest in the Senate Finance Committee and what's going on in the nonprofit sector. All these things let us know that there is in fact a greater

awareness and a greater kind of accountability of what happens in nonprofit organizations. I think that certainly is all there today, and I think that the role that we've played in helping people understand philanthropy, getting the word about philanthropy, the context about philanthropy out to the general public through local media here and national media has been an important part of that as well.