



How to become a PHILANTHROPIST

By Tovah Bryan

Got some spare change jingling around in your pockets? Maybe you want to give it to someone less fortunate.

Contrary to popular belief, it's not impossible for the average woman to be a philanthropist. You don't have to be rich. All you need is an abiding desire to make the world a better place, plus some willingness and effort.

At the age of two, Lily, the daughter of Anne Morgan Giroux and her husband, David, was diagnosed with a form of epilepsy. (She's now a 14-year-old middle school student.) Thanks to good insurance, Lily's family was able to get her the medical help she needed and she has not had a seizure in several years. But the family still longs for a cure.

"We read in the paper about a discovery by researchers at UW-Madison — something called 2DG," says Giroux. "It has the potential to calm seizures. It mimics what the ketogenic diet (all fat, no carbs) would do. For some people, the diet works like a miracle but it's extremely hard to be on. One M&M and your child is having seizures again. This 2DG could be like putting the diet into a capsule."

The couple formed Lily's Fund for Epilepsy Research to raise money for UW research. "My husband and I were so impressed that

this research was going on one mile from our home! We wanted to support it," says Giroux.

The fund is managed by the UW Foundation. "You don't have to start your own nonprofit, which is very difficult to do," Giroux says. "And this goes to support cutting-edge research into cures for epilepsy."

An event called Lily's Luau raised \$16,000, "and we expect to raise another \$50,000 over the next year," she says. "You don't have to be rich. You can start with nothing. With energy and motivation you can do anything you want."

Even in today's economy, there is a role for philanthropy: "Finding corporate sponsors has been a little harder as businesses are tightening their belts, but people are still supporting good causes," Giroux says.

Martha Taylor of the Women's Philanthropy Council agrees. "Begin your philanthropy as early in life as possible," she says. "Even if you can't give as much as you like, your gifts will add up and begin to form your legacy." But there are so many needs. How do you find the right one? "You must first start with yourself," she says. "What are your values? What do you want to do with your money that is meaningful to you to make a difference in the world?" She suggests women choose an "issue of cause" and focus on it.

But she also encourages flexibility. "Leave room for responding to projects that excite you or needs that arise in the community or the world," she says. "For example, many women are responding to social service needs today because of the economic effect on the poor."



Martha Taylor
Women's
Philanthropy
Council



(L to R) The Giroux family: Lily, Anne, Sophie, Dave and Amanda.

Taylor suggests giving through the Madison Community Foundation and the United Way. Like Giroux, she sees great value in committing funds to tried-and-true, already-existing organizations rather than trying to invent one on one's own. The Madison Community Foundation, she explains, offers donors a structure to designate their own giving through funds you can establish — and it makes general grants to the community from funds people give for this purpose.

The United Way, Taylor says, provides a great deal of oversight of the nonprofits they give to. "I am a big fan of cooperative giving," she says.

Amy Overby, vice president of donor relations at the Madison Community Foundation, says the organization's mission is to "encourage, facilitate and manage long-term philanthropy. Essentially, we make personalized charitable giving easy for people in the Dane County region who want to



Amy Overby
Madison
Community
Foundation

make a difference. In 2008, over \$10 million was distributed to charitable causes throughout Wisconsin, the U.S. and around the world." It's a vehicle for giving that doesn't require you to develop your own organization.

Most importantly, choose a cause in which you deeply believe, "one that is near and dear to your heart," concludes Giroux.

Tovah Bryan is a Madison-area freelance writer.

Start giving

Contact the following organizations about becoming a philanthropist:

UW Foundation

263-4545
www.uwfoundation.wisc.edu

Madison Community Foundation

232-1763
www.madisoncommunityfoundation.org

United Way

246-4350
www.unitedwaydanecounty.org

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