



A Recent Article from *WomanScope News Magazine*

As women's economic power grows over the coming decades, so grows their giving potential. On November 5, the Bryn Mawr School of Baltimore and the H.P. Colhoun Family Foundation convened an expert panel to consider how women philanthropists will exercise their charitable clout as more than \$41 trillion in wealth transfers to women's control over the next fifty years.

Led by philanthropist, retired investment manager, and former Wall Street Week commentator Howard P. (Pete) Colhoun, the "Women and Philanthropy" panel addressed practical and philosophical giving concerns: How can women balance their desire to give with an assurance of future financial security? How and to what extent do they involve their children in deciding inheritance versus charitable bequests? What drives women's choices between competing worthy causes?

Security versus Charity

Women's comparative longevity, says panelist and veteran development consultant Abbie J. von Schlegell, is a significant factor in their philanthropy. On average, women live seven years longer than men and even wealthy women express more concern than men about making their money last. Consequently, women may be more inclined to leave large bequests than to make significant donations while living. Colhoun refers to this as "giving with cold hands" versus "giving with warm hands". And he and the panelists believe that women may be underestimating their financial position and missing the joy of seeing their gifts at work.

Financial literacy is the key to balancing this desire for financial security with charitable objectives. Panelist Charles W. Collier, a senior philanthropic advisor at Harvard University, cites community foundations as a key resource for philanthropic education. Local foundations such as the Baltimore Community Foundation, for example, can assist donors and their financial advisors in structuring tax-savvy gifts and establishing donor-advised funds. Such funds allow donors to have some control over their gifts while avoiding the administrative expense and burden of establishing a family foundation.

With the growing trend in schools and universities to provide financial education and philanthropic curriculum, the next generation of women may be better positioned to make smart giving decisions. For this generation, von Schlegell notes that banks and financial institutions are jumping in with numerous programs for women.

counsel in advancement



Are Women Really Different – When It Comes To Giving?

An expert on women’s philanthropy and co-editor of *Women as Donor, Women as Philanthropists*, von Schlegell sees women approaching their financial education and philanthropy differently than men. In the past decade, women have seized on investment clubs and women’s giving circles to pool resources, learn collaboratively about investing and philanthropy, and leverage their financial impact. By pooling their money, smaller donors can achieve a major philanthropist’s clout.

In a recent telephone interview, von Schlegell said giving circles are a good demonstration of key differences in the way women make giving decisions: Women are comfortable working in groups and making collaborative financial decisions. They want to understand community needs thoroughly before making a gift. They expect more involvement with recipients before and after a gift is made. And, in terms of causes, von Schlegell says their life experience drive different choices. “Women are more aware of less advantaged women [such as] single mothers with children. They’re more concerned with the demographics of the people served [by their gifts].”

Von Schlegell cites fellow panelist Margaret M. H. Obrecht as a textbook example of the woman philanthropist. Obrecht riveted the panel’s audience with a description of her volunteer work in Uganda where she has helped fund and build shelters for the “night children.” These children, ages 7 and up, flee their villages at night to evade kidnapping and induction into the Lord’s Resistance Army, a notorious rebel group. Moved by her volunteer experience, Obrecht has evolved from volunteer to donor, fundraiser, and advocate for the cause.

Such passion and involvement, says von Schlegell, is typical of women’s philanthropy. “It all comes down to personal reasons – relationship, loyalty, and passion.” Since women’s generosity so often begins with personal involvement, charitable organizations are well-advised to provide ample opportunities for volunteerism and board service.

Our Children’s Legacy

One of the thorniest questions facing women is how much to leave their children and how much to bequeath to charity. The panelists suggest these decisions come down more to individual family values than estate tax planning strategies. In fact, says Collier, tax- favored vehicles are among the last issues to be considered.

Collier is also author of *Wealth in Families*, a wise reflection on the role of family wealth and philanthropy. Collier advocates using family discussions about finances and charity to create “an expression of one’s deepest family values.” Such discussions, he says, provide the opportunity to think strategically about the change your generosity could create in the world and to work towards that



change as a family. With his fellow panelists, he urges women to have age-appropriate conversations with their children around giving and receiving and to think carefully about creating positive change in our society.

Women's lasting philanthropic legacies, suggests the panel, will be fueled not only by an enormous transfer of wealth but by a transfer of values to our children.

For extensive local resources on philanthropy, visit the websites for the Baltimore Community Foundation (www.bcf.org) and the Association of Baltimore Area Grantmakers (www.abagmd.org). To learn more about trends in women's philanthropy, check out: the Women's Philanthropy Institute (www.womenphilanthropy.org); Women & Philanthropy (www.womenphil.org); and the Women's Funding Network (www.wfnet.org).

NOTE: The Bryn Mawr School, host of the Women and Philanthropy discussion, is a private girls' school founded by five women philanthropists in 1885.

Link: www.womanscope.com/index.html