



Women and Philanthropy: **Time, Treasure, Talent**

In the popular imagination, philanthropy is a field dominated by hard-driving, high-achieving men. Names like Carnegie and Rockefeller immediately conjure images of powerful corporate titans channeling dynastic wealth to advance the public good, with impact that has spanned generations.

Yet if conventional wisdom holds that charitable giving is overshadowed by men, statistics tell a different story. Researchers from Indiana University's esteemed Lilly Family School of Philanthropy recently published data showing that women *are more likely* to give than their male counterparts are – and, in fact, that women's donations are likely to be larger. *Forbes* reports that women give almost twice as much of their wealth away as men do. Perhaps just as significantly, a Lilly Family School of Philanthropy study found that female donors seek to establish relationships with the organizations they support, indicating an openness to long-term investments capable of fostering sustainable change.

Central to our work at The Foundation is nurturing the voices of women in Los Angeles: recognizing the unique talents, interests, and perspectives women bring to their philanthropic giving and empowering them to make a difference both locally and beyond. Below we introduce you to three dynamic women who are leveraging The Foundation's expertise and resources with their own to strengthen the fabric of our community.

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Building a Legacy: Susan Hirsch Wohl

Giving back comes naturally to Susan Hirsch Wohl. Growing up in a house with parents who emphasized the importance of *tzedakah*, Susan was always mindful of how she could contribute to help people in need.

“My mom (Nita) was a Holocaust survivor, and she believed strongly in charitable giving because she was so grateful to be in the United States. My dad (Bob) came from an observant family, and *tzedakah* was woven into the fabric of his life. So for them, it was second nature,” Susan recalls. “They couldn’t afford much in the early years, but they always gave something.”



Susan Hirsch Wohl with her husband Alan and family.

Over time, Bob’s real estate business thrived, and he became a major benefactor of the Los Angeles Jewish Home. Eventually, in 1986, he set up the Robert and Anita Hirsch Family Foundation Fund at The Foundation, a vehicle that has allowed his daughter to build a philanthropic legacy for the entire family.

Today, under Susan’s direction, the Hirsch Family Fund works to advance Jewish education, medical research, and a host of other causes. “My mom died of Alzheimer’s disease, and I’m very interested in neurological research. She was a fantastic cook, and my older son, Matt, went to culinary school, so issues related to food are also high on my list,” she says. “Overall, I feel a strong pull toward LA-based organizations and Jewish groups.”

As she identifies new opportunities for family giving, Susan is also focused on inculcating a commitment to *tzedakah* in her two boys. “I require Matt and his brother, Linden, to give a certain percentage of their bank accounts every year,” she notes, “and my will states that five percent of any money they inherit must go to charity. They know it’s a major priority of mine and that their future includes giving – hopefully to Jewish causes.”

From Susan’s perspective, The Foundation is an ideal place to make philanthropy a family affair, bringing her sons, her husband Alan and her stepdaughter Larissa together around issues of mutual concern. “The Foundation is a great partner, with fantastic educational resources for kids and adults,” she says. “With their assistance, my family is learning how we can implement our own vision of what giving back should look like.”

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The Foundation is also stewarding Susan’s charitable assets to help them grow. “Our fund is growing and able to do lots of good things,” she says. “I’m very grateful.”

Healing the World: Sheila Baran Spiwak

Family was also the impetus for Sheila Baran Spiwak's charitable impulse. "When I was growing up, giving back was an ordinary part of the daily routine," she remembers. "At home, we were always doing something in the community. In fact, my mom received the first Volunteer of the Year Award ever given by United Jewish Welfare Fund (precursor to The Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles)."

Sheila's parents and uncle were successful entrepreneurs who worked together to build the business her grandparents had founded, Southwestern Bag Company, which has been located in downtown Los Angeles since 1924. As the company's sales increased, they created the Baran Endowment at The Foundation in 1999, dedicated to addressing a broad range of needs locally, nationally, and in Israel.

The Baran Endowment—which exemplifies an ideal grantmaking partnership between The Foundation and a donor family—distributes significant resources to expand the capacity of diverse nonprofits, from Jewish Family Service and the Jewish Free Loan Association to organizations providing humanitarian relief.

As part of the family's philanthropy, Sheila and her husband, Alan, fund nonprofits whose missions address food insecurity and further Jewish education. "We believe perpetuating the Jewish people means educating people Jewishly – giving them the tools to be Jewish in their own particular ways," Sheila says.



Sheila Baran Spiwak with her husband Alan and family.

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For Sheila, that includes advocating for the rights of humans as well as animals: She supports Bet Tzedek, which provides free legal services for low-income individuals, and groups like the Peregrine Fund, which works to prevent the extinction of birds of prey. "I have a passion for wildlife and preservation, everything from saving condors to protecting the habitat of orangutans," she enthuses. "I think advancing human rights and animal rights are part and parcel of the same thing. Both touch who we are on this planet and how we can make it a more sustainable place to live."

Sheila and Alan have two children and five grandchildren, and The Foundation is a vital ally in enabling them to pass the philanthropic torch to the next generation. "Our kids, Aaron and Sarah, also each have a charitable fund at The Foundation. It's taught them how to collaborate, how to vet a nonprofit, and how to look at the need out there and make a more informed decision about what to support," she says. "It's a great example of the value that The Foundation brings to the equation."

Honoring the Past: Suzanne Weiss Morgen



Suzanne Weiss Morgen

To hear Suzanne Weiss Morgen tell it, philanthropy is not unlike singing: Both disciplines require you to find your voice and then give you a wonderful platform to influence and change the world. Suzanne – a professional voice teacher, singer, composer, lyricist, and poet – is increasingly vocal as a philanthropist in Los Angeles, with help from The Foundation.

Through Donor Advised Funds at The Foundation, Suzanne’s charitable giving supports two educational endowments at UCLA, her alma mater. Both were established to honor the memory of her parents (who were also Bruins) and her grandmother. In 2016, she established the Vocal Vision Awards at the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music, which invites singers from the opera department (both undergraduates and graduates) to learn an aria, art song, or classic musical theater piece in English and then present it at a free public recital on campus. Prizes in the form of scholarships are awarded to the top three performers.

“I studied opera, and my mother and grandmother loved opera and classical singing, so it seemed like a natural fit,” Suzanne says. “They would have been thrilled that we’re giving young singers the opportunity to perform and showcasing them to judges who can provide real-world feedback, and possibly help facilitate their careers.”

To memorialize her father, Suzanne launched the Henry “Hank” Weiss Memorial Climate Education Endowment at UCLA’s Center for Climate Science, part of the university’s Institute of the Environment and Sustainability. “My dad began his career in the army during World War II as a meteorologist and then went on to complete his studies in one of the nation’s only meteorology degree programs, which was at UCLA,” Suzanne explains.

Among other things, the endowment seeks to inspire the next generation of climate scientists, funding a biennial event that brings less advantaged high school students to campus, along with the general public, for an entertaining and educational afternoon.

In addition to her education-centered giving, Suzanne is focused on the overlap of music and healing. “I work with vibration, energy, and sound balance in my vocal teaching, and I am interested in supporting the use of all those elements and more to promote beautiful voices and also to benefit people recovering from illness, stress, and trauma,” she says.

Suzanne and her husband, Henry, chose to team up with The Foundation because they wanted a partner that understood the philanthropic landscape. “There are a lot of people at The Foundation to help you, and they encourage you to pick their brains,” she points out. “They help you set up the structure of your fund and make sure that when you want to make a grant, it’s a simple process.”



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Susan, Sheila, and Suzanne all approach giving from a different angle, each pursuing her own ideas of how to improve lives in our community and around the globe. What they have in common is confidence in The Foundation to translate those ideas into tangible reality – to help them craft strategic objectives and then map a clear path to reaching their goals.

“The Foundation brings so much to the table, making me aware of incredible programs I never could have found on my own,” Sheila says. “Plus, The Foundation performs the due diligence and takes care of all the logistics and paperwork.”

Another crucial advantage The Foundation brings is its connection to the community, both Jewishly and generally, Suzanne observes. “The Foundation really has its finger on the pulse of what’s happening in and around Los Angeles, so I know it will be able to guide me as I increase the scope of my giving over time.”

In the final analysis, Susan says, perhaps the most compelling benefit of partnering with The Foundation is also the simplest: **“It feels so good to give, and The Foundation makes it easy.”**

