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Our Values

WE STRENGTHEN PHILANTHROPY, FAMILIES, AND SOCIETY

The National Center for Family Philanthropy was founded to encourage individuals and families to create and sustain a philanthropic mission. Our statement of values and guiding principles is critical to those volunteers and staff charged with shaping the organization's future, to those we hope to serve, and to the public we hope will come to better understand the role of philanthropy in our society.

We value the participation of individuals and families in private, organized philanthropy.

We value the contributions of countless individual philanthropists who generously contribute to our society's well being. We also recognize that there is great value in the donor's decision to engage his or her family in the philanthropic process. When those who share a commitment to one another share an equally heartfelt commitment to something beyond the family—the community—both are enhanced. The motivation to engage in philanthropy—often the desire to “give back”—is the inspiration for charitable gift-giving. That gift-giving often takes the primary form of philanthropic dollars, badly needed social capital. But we also value the compassion and personal passion and commitment that represent the unique gifts of individual and family philanthropy. The privilege of participating in the philanthropic process and the joy that often comes from this participation are the gifts to the donor and family.

We are committed to a mission and services based on our fundamental belief in the value of philanthropy and the ongoing participation of the donor and family.

We value the donor's right and ability to direct charitable assets through the philanthropic vehicles and to programs of choice. We believe the genius of private philanthropy is the variety of opportunity and the diversity of choices available to the donor. We believe that the appropriateness and effectiveness of both the philanthropic vehicle and the grant decisions are largely dependent on the donor's goals for both family and community. We celebrate the differences among grant makers and value both the independence and the interdependence of our field.

We are committed to respecting the variety of philanthropic choices and this respect will be reflected in our programming, our outreach, our governance and our operations.



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FUN FACTS

The nation's largest family foundation is the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. With assets of about \$30 billion in 2008, the Gates Foundation is also the nation's largest foundation.

We value the personal acts of generosity that inspire private philanthropy. We understand and respect both the issues of privacy and public trust that accompany the decision to engage in philanthropy. Whether motivated by family tradition, religious ethic, or concern for one's own or one's family's well being, privacy is a significant and legitimate concern of individual and family donors. We also recognize that society has, through both policy and public trust, created the system that makes private acts of generosity in the public interest both possible and rewarded.

We are committed to respecting issues of privacy and the critical need for maintaining the public's trust and believe that these cannot be viewed as exclusive. Both—by nature and policy—coexist in private, organized philanthropy, and both must coexist in our mission and activities. We bear an important responsibility for enlightening ourselves, our field and the public on issues related to both.

We value the pursuit of excellence in philanthropy. As we value the rights of donors to make choices appropriate to their mission and purpose, we recognize that there are responsibilities attendant to those rights. We value ethical conduct and effective practice in grantmaking, governance, and management. While appreciating the variety of decisions available regarding structure, philosophy, and priorities, we value thoughtful, informed processes for reaching those decisions. The ability of those in the field to pursue both personal satisfaction and philanthropic excellence may well depend on the quality of the information and educational opportunities available to them. Further, we understand that donors and potential donors often learn best from those who share their circumstances and experiences.

We are committed to gathering and disseminating the highest quality information, resource materials, and assistance needed by donors as they pursue ethical, effective grantmaking. Our educational opportunities will reflect our commitment to providing the opportunity for donors to inspire and learn from one another wherever and whenever possible.

We value the role that philanthropy and philanthropic citizenship play in a civil society. Alexis de Tocqueville wrote that to be great, a country must be good. We believe our democratic society depends on the active participation of the nonprofit community, including private philanthropy. Philanthropy is a global tradition, but the history, circumstances, and structure of private philanthropy in the United States have contributed to the distinctive character and contributions of the American charitable sector. We value a public climate and public policy that are supportive of the active engagement of philanthropy in this society. Further, we recognize that such a public climate is likely dependent on our ability to make explicit the contributions philanthropy has made and the goals donors hope to achieve.

We are committed to informing the public of the contributions and value of private family philanthropy. We believe this commitment can result in an informed, supportive citizenry and enhance our ability to reach potential donors.

We value the participation of new voices in our field. These voices may come from the newly wealthy, new donors or those who inherit a charitable tradition from their parents and grandparents. They may come from communities of color or populations new to our country. We know that their participation in philanthropy may not happen as a matter of course but likely depends on the inspiration, invitation, information, and models we can provide.

We are committed to embracing our responsibility for inspiring, preparing, and supporting a new generation of philanthropic leaders.

We value collaboration and respect our colleagues in this work. Both in leadership and service, the opportunity to engage other individuals and philanthropic organizations in our work and to serve as a resource for their own activities presents enormous opportunities for mutual benefit. We respect and value the work of our colleagues engaged in serving the field of philanthropy. We also recognize that our work may involve a new community of colleagues whose commitment to serving individuals of wealth, families, family businesses, and others in this arena may well be enhanced by the philanthropic information and programming we have to share.

We are committed to being an active, supportive, and respectful partner to our colleagues in philanthropy and in related fields.

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