

National Philanthropy Day®:

Bigger and Better

By Stacey Jensen

This year marks the **20th**
celebration of philanthropy's day

“**T**he literal meaning of ‘philanthropy’ is ‘affection for mankind.’ Throughout our history, we Americans have displayed this trait through our generous charitable giving and our spirit of neighbor helping neighbor. We help each other, and we reach out to help people all over the

world. Our tradition of voluntarism embodies a great deal of caring, initiative, and ingenuity in solving problems and improving our communities. It is one of our greatest strengths as a people.”

—President Ronald Reagan, Nov. 14, 1986, proclamation declaring Nov. 15, 1986, National Philanthropy Day®

NATIONAL PHILANTHROPY DAY® TIME LINE

Did You Know...?

After five years of work, thousands of dollars and hundreds of letters, Doug Freeman, J.D. LL.M., founder and national managing partner of IFF Advisors LLC and the law firm of Freeman, Freeman & Smiley in Los Angeles and Irvine, Calif., NSFRE and the rest of the organizing committee expected great media coverage in 1986 when President Ronald Reagan proclaimed Nov. 15 as National Philanthropy Day®.

There was great media coverage that day, but the reporters present had another matter on their minds. “After President Reagan read the proclamation,” recalls Freeman, who attended the press conference and happened to be sitting next to Reagan, “he immediately announced the investigation of the Iran-Contra Affair.”

The next day Freeman was not getting calls from the media about NPD, but rather questions about what he might know about the Iran-Contra Affair!

Nov. 14, 1986

President Ronald Reagan issues a proclamation declaring National Philanthropy Day®

Nov. 15, 1986

First National Philanthropy Day®

1986

Marvin Hamlisch composes *Now, More Than Ever*, the official song of NPD

1986

Actor Bob Hope is the NSFRE Greater Los Angeles Chapter celebrity spokesperson



Who would have imagined 20 years ago that this formal, official proclamation would become an international celebration? This November—the 20th celebration of National Philanthropy Day®—hundreds of thousands of men and women in Canada, Mexico and the United States will gather together to honor those who give their time, talents and resources for the betterment of society. Indeed, fundraisers, philanthropists, volunteers and business and community leaders will offer a collective, well-deserved “thank you”!

An Idea Whose Time Had Come

For Douglas Freeman, J.D. LL.M., founder and national managing partner of IFF Advisors LLC and the law firm of Freeman, Freeman & Smiley in Los Angeles and Irvine, Calif., giving had been ingrained since childhood. One day in 1981, he was on a plane back to his home in California after having made a presentation on philanthropy in Minnesota. During his presentation, he had found himself acknowledging how philanthropic Minnesota was. He realized then that, as fundraisers, we simply do not say “thank you” enough to the people who support the nonprofit sector in so many ways.

“We say ‘thank you’ as an institution to our own donors, but we don’t say it to our community and to every-

one’s donors,” he explains.

With this thought in mind, Freeman wrote a letter to then Chief of Staff Ed Meese, suggesting that the government set aside a time to say thank you. The day was Nov. 15, and the name was National Philanthropy Day®.

The White House did not immediately take to the idea, however. It was not until 1982 that Freeman received an invitation to Washington, D.C., to meet with the new Office of Private Sector Initiatives (OPSI). In order to have President Reagan endorse the legislation, NPD needed congressional approval. This was not an easy feat, considering that the legislation had to be sponsored by 51 senators and a majority of representatives—just to be brought to the floor for a vote.

The Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP), the National Society of Fund Raising Executives (NSFRE) at that time, together with some of the top leaders in the nonprofit sector, joined Freeman and formed the National Organizing Committee with the hope of having National Philanthropy Day® passed through Congress and ultimately recognized by the president. The 29-member committee

represented such organizations as the American Heart Association, Boy Scouts of America, Council on Foundations, National Association for Hospital Development and more (for a complete list of committee members, visit the AFP website at www.afpnet.org).

“At the time, it wasn’t all that exciting to people, and it required a lot of hard work,” recalls Milton Murray, FAHP, a past member of the organizing committee.

It also required a lot of money. In addition to lobbying and thousands of letters, the committee was responsible for raising \$250,000 annually to fund the effort.

Their work paid off. The legislation passed Congress and the first National Philanthropy Day® was scheduled for Nov. 15, 1986. An inaugural press conference was scheduled for the day before, Nov. 14, with President Reagan proclaiming Nov. 15 as National Philanthropy Day®.

Was there ever a time when Freeman thought about stopping or giving up? “No, it just had to be done,” he says. “It was definitely worth the time and effort.”

Murray agrees. “National Philanthropy Day provides a hook, a peg, a doorknob, on which people can hang



1988

Frank Hubbard serves as NPD Chairman

1989

Art Linkletter serves as Master of Ceremonies for Greater LA Chapter, in addition to recording public service announcements

Oct. 7, 1998

United States postage stamp honoring philanthropy is issued

1999

The *New York Times* releases its first Giving supplement highlighting philanthropy

2001

The First Lady of Mexico, Marta Sahagún de Fox, attends the AFP Mexico City Chapter NPD celebration

2003

AFP unveils the NPD website, www.nationalphilanthropyday.org, and NPD banner for use on websites

2003

AFP begins its partnership with Canada’s *National Post* to produce a philanthropy day supplement

2004

Miss America 2005, Diedra Downs, receives AFP Alabama Chapter’s first Young Philanthropist Award



their connection to philanthropy, which adds to the importance and universality of philanthropy.”

Chapter Celebrations

The rise of NPD was not just about the hard work of a few committed men and women. Chapters across North America also have been working hard to promote NPD in their own ways.

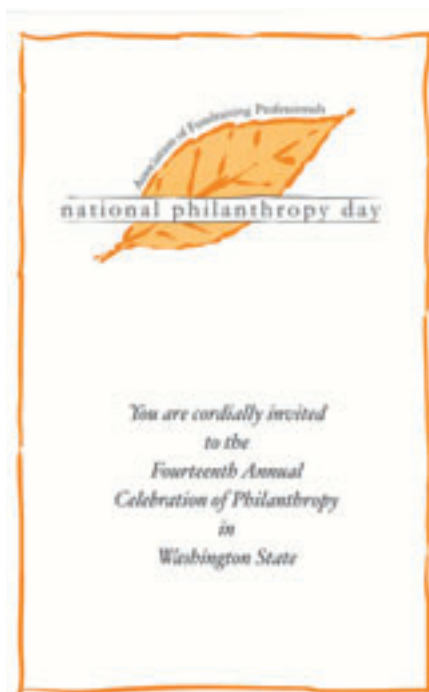
“National Philanthropy Day has become a critical activity for many AFP chapters,” says Paulette Maehara, CFRE, CAE, president and CEO of AFP. “But it’s no longer just about recognizing leaders within the philanthropic world. It has become a community event that resonates with the entire public and seeks to bring everyone together to remember the tremendous accomplishments philanthropy has made in our world.”

In 1987, the AFP Washington Chapter decided to celebrate its first NPD, says Lynn G. Schrader, CFRE, assistant dean for development & external relations for the Daniel J. Evans School of Public Affairs in Seattle and the chapter’s past president and NPD co-chair.

The chapter decided to partner with Washington Gives, a local effort started in 1986 to promote philanthropy and giving in the state. According to Schrader, there was enormous interest in Washington Gives at the time, which in turn helped spark interest in National Philanthropy Day®. The chapter and Washington Gives worked together to sponsor the “Give 5” campaign that encouraged people to give 5 percent of their income and 5 hours of volunteer time a week to a charitable organization. The partnership was a huge success, Schrader says, with almost 800 people attending the celebration.

The chapter’s annual NPD celebration, which includes a luncheon and partnerships with key local third-sector associations, has changed only slightly over the years, Schrader says. It was not until 1989 that the chapter began handing out awards, and now almost 1,000 attendees participate in the celebration.

As Maehara points out, “The fact that National Philanthropy Day has



only grown stronger over the years proves just how important this day is to our sector and how critical philanthropy has become to our communities and the world in general.”

In fact, NPD has become an international celebration.

NPD Goes Global

Canada. Chapters throughout Canada have embraced NPD. The AFP Calgary Chapter, for example, held its first NPD celebration in 1997. “At first, we weren’t sure if we should rename National Philanthropy Day,” recalls Andrea McManus, CFRE, principal, The Development Group and past president and NPD chair for the Calgary Chapter. “We weren’t sure if ‘philanthropy’ had enough resonance in Canada.”

The chapter decided to go with the original name and the event was very successful—in large part due to an effective marketing campaign. “We developed and distributed a ‘What is Philanthropy’ scratch card,” McManus explains. This created so much interest that the chapter’s first event featured more than 400 people.

At the second or third celebration, the chapter introduced its Generosity of Spirit® awards to honor outstanding philanthropists—corporations, small businesses, individuals, families, youth and lifetime givers. Since then, the Calgary NPD event has become so popular that it has expanded into a full week of activities, including forums for seasoned

professionals and a small business forum to introduce businesses to philanthropy, in addition to the awards ceremony and a luncheon that attracts 1,200 attendees each year. “NPD has been a key piece in establishing philanthropy and fundraisers as an important part of Calgary,” McManus points out.

Mexico. Carlos Madrid Varela, development director for Patronato Hospital Infantil de Mexico and president of the AFP Mexico City Chapter, recognizes the importance of NPD. “National Philanthropy Day has allowed Mexico City to establish itself as part of the world celebration,” he explains.

The Mexico City Chapter celebrated its first National Philanthropy Day® in 1993, the same year the chapter was created. Varela, who became a member of AFP after attending the NPD event in 1994, remembers that about 250 people attended the first breakfast celebration.

The event generates considerable press coverage, Varela points out, since from the beginning the chapter has always chosen a very prominent individual for the outstanding philanthropist award. The First Lady of Mexico, Marta Sahagún de Fox, attended the NPD celebration in 2001!

“It has been a lot of work,” Varela admits, “but it’s worth it.”

All About Philanthropy

While National Philanthropy Day® has grown and spread over the years, one thing remains true—its celebration of philanthropy. “National Philanthropy Day has grown and flourished in the past 20 years,” Freeman says, “but it has remained true to philanthropy and has kept its calling.”

Maehara agrees. “I am so pleased to know that despite all our sector has faced and overcome the past 20 years, we still take the time to honor all those who make what we do possible. Whether it is a luncheon, a week-long event or a small gathering, we have remained true to the original spirit of National Philanthropy Day and have found the time to say, collectively, ‘thank you.’”

Let the celebrations begin! ☪