

## LAW REVIEW

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### GIVE YOUR CHARITABLE DOLLARS LOCALLY

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*“WE MAKE A LIVING BY WHAT WE GET; WE MAKE A LIFE BY WHAT WE GIVE.”* Winston Churchill

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That advice from Sir Winston really hits the mark for me. The past two years have been tough for our family, and one thing I have learned is that in the end what really matters is relationships and family. What you do for others.

No one is going to stand up at your service and tell your friends how you were the best worker in the office. The lasting stories told will be how you made a difference. What you have done with yourself and for others.

When someone tells me they don't get involved because whatever they do won't be enough to make a difference, I quote Betty Reese: “If you think you are too small to be effective, you have never been in bed with a mosquito.” The littlest thing *can* make a difference.

#### Don't Donate to Your College Alma Mater

I read an article by attorney Martin Kimel in the *Los Angeles Times*, titled “Don't Waste Your Charity on Rich Colleges.” Kimel sings my song.

Kimel's piece describes the university "endowment races that suck scarce philanthropic resources from underfunded charities." He points out that Stanford University recently had an endowment of \$15.2 billion, while Harvard's was nearly twice that. In 2004, the endowments of the ten richest American universities were worth \$78 billion. Two years ago Stanford announced a campaign to raise a record \$4.3 billion, joining Columbia and Cornell in the \$4 billion fund drive category. Harvard's last fund raising effort was to raise \$5 billion. Good for them.

### Donate Locally

The point of charitable giving is to benefit society, not to build massive endowments and university facilities to attract famous faculty and enhance the prestige of the university. That's my take anyway.

Here's how you make a difference. Donate locally.

Universities and large organizations have a whole nation to pull from for their charitable dollars. Our local organizations only have a small region to support them. For example, Project MANA has an annual budget under \$300,000. Believe me, they make a difference. For what they do, you would think they have a budget ten times that.

KidZone operates with an annual budget under \$250,000. They are lean and effective.

My own alma mater, U.C. Davis, a terrific school, has an annual fundraising department budget of nearly \$15 million. If your heart tells you to

give to your alma mater, then by all means do it. But if you want to get more “bang for your buck”, keep your charitable dollars local.

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A friend of mine has a policy of only giving within thirty miles of her home. She likes to see her money at work.

I remember working with a local woman who wanted to make a donation to help unwed mothers and young girls who never had a chance to go to college. In the end she left all of her considerable assets to the University of Southern California. Like they need it. Her contribution will be a drop in the bucket and will likely never make it to unwed mothers. What a shame, as that money could have benefited young girls in our community.

Property owners in Lahontan took a different tack. They formed the Lahontan Community Foundation under the wing of Truckee Tahoe Community Foundation and have awarded more than \$700,000 into our local community since 2002.

Truckee Tahoe Community Foundation

Our own Truckee Tahoe Community Foundation, started in 1999, controls assets of over \$15 million and has given over 1,500 grants totaling \$9 million, most locally—to dozens of worthwhile organizations and causes. \$9 million is a staggering number—the result of generous locals and second homeowners.

Some give for the passion. Others for tax breaks; they save money giving it away. Donating to the Truckee Tahoe Community Foundation makes sense, as it works in a wide range of areas of interest, so if you want to help seniors, TTCF can steer you to the Sierra Senior Services. Want to benefit families, consider the Family Resource Centers in Kings Beach and Truckee or the Wellspring Counseling Center. These are organizations on shoestring budgets. And there are more. For example, the Truckee Donner Land Trust and the Truckee River Watershed Council both do tremendous work on modest budgets and you can see the results of their work every single day as you drive around town

Give locally and change a life—and by doing so define your own life. Year end is approaching. Don't wait.

MAY THIS HOLIDAY SEASON FIND YOU BLESSED  
WITH THE PRESENCE OF FAMILY AND FRIENDS.

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