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**Grassroots**

**Fundraising**

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**Journal**

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**Mail Appeals:**

# But Will They Open the Envelope?

*by Kim Klein*

**M**any mail appeals fail because although much attention has been spent writing an effective letter, it is enclosed in an envelope that no one opens.

Mail appeals are called "packages" because they are more than letters in an envelope. The entire unit consists of the letter, the return forms and return envelope, and the outside envelope in which the contents are sent. Each is an important part of the package.

First-class personal and business mail can be sent in a plain envelope with great security that the person receiving the letter will open it. In the case of first-class mail, the envelope is simply a convenient way to carry the message.

In a fundraising appeal sent by bulk mail, however, the outside envelope has an entirely different purpose. It must grab the prospect's attention and then intrigue them enough that they want to open it and see what's inside. The envelope in this case is like gift wrapping. Everyone wants to know what's inside a present. In fact, gift-wrapping works so well that even when you may know what the gift is, there is still the thrill of discovery in opening the wrapping.

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*The envelope is like  
gift wrapping.*

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That thrill and that curiosity—from the low level if you know what is inside to the high level if you don't, is what you should strive for with mail appeals. Make the prospect want to know what is inside the envelope.

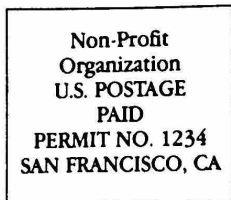
There are many ways to entice someone to open an envelope; different ways will work effectively with different audiences. For the purposes of this article, we will concentrate on effective use of the outside envelope for small mail appeals (200–5,000 pieces) sent by bulk mail to new prospects.

## ***Getting Personal***

The main idea is to make the envelope look as if it contains a personal letter. There are two ways to make

that happen: 1) make the envelope look as if it were sent by first-class mail, or 2) make it different from other mail appeals the prospect will be receiving.

The methods you choose to accomplish this purpose



*Bulk mail indicia*    *Pre-cancelled bulk mail stamps*

will depend on how many volunteers you have to help with the mailing, your judgment about whether this is the best use of their volunteer time, how many pieces you are actually sending, and your goal for the mailing.

### **Look First Class**

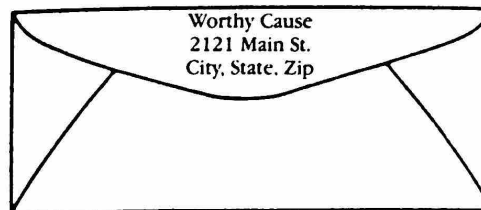
The best way to make a mail appeal look as if it came by first class is to hand-write the address. If you have an appeal going to fewer than 750 names, this is not too arduous a task. The addresses can also be handtyped for a similar effect.

In addition to or instead of writing or typing the address, you can use a pre-cancelled bulk-mail stamp in

place of the more common postal indicia. These stamps may be purchased at the post office where you send your bulk mail. The rules for sorting and handling the mail are the same as for any other bulk mailing.

Consider the rest of the envelope. If you are in a major metropolitan area where a lot of mail appeals originate, don't put your name and return address in the upper left-hand corner. Either put it on the back flap of the envelope, or use only your address without your organi-

*Address on back flap*



*Address only on front of envelope*

4264 Any St.  
San Francisco  
CA 94522

### *Vary the size or style of the envelope:*

No. 10 Official  
9½" (horizontal) x 4½" (vertical)

No. 7¾ Official  
7½" (horizontal) x 3¾" (vertical)

No. 6¾ Announcement  
6½" (horizontal) x 4¾" (vertical)

No. 6¾ Commercial  
6½" (horizontal) x 3¾" (vertical)

## The Purpose of Direct Mail

**D**irect mail has three functions: 1) to acquire donors, 2) to ask those donors to repeat their gifts, and 3) to ask donors to renew their commitment to your organization annually. The first function is the most important, and the distinction between the second two is somewhat technical.

### 1) Donor Acquisition

The primary purpose of direct mail is not fundraising, but acquiring donors from whom you will later raise money. For example, an environmental organization trades 2000 names of their donors for 2000 names of donors to a land trust. They send a direct mail appeal and 1% of the land trust donors join the environmental group (1%–3% is the expected response to direct mail). This gives the environmental group 20 new donors. Suppose it cost 40 cents for each piece of mail (including postage, printing and paper and the use of a mail house to send it). The total cost is \$800. Suppose most of the 20 donors gave \$35, which is the suggested donation for membership. Some gave more and some less, but the environmental group grossed \$700 on the mailing. On the surface, it is true that they lost \$100. But, in fact, they spent \$100 to acquire 20 donors, who will now be moved into phase 2.

### 2) Get donors to repeat their gift

Once a person becomes a donor, the organization has to try to ensure that the donor maintains a loyalty to their group and gives routinely. The best way to do that is to ask the donor for money more than once a year. It is in this step that direct mail has gotten into a lot of trouble with current donors.

How many times can you ask someone for extra gifts in the course of the same year? Research has shown that an organization can ask its donors for money by mail 12 to 14 times a year and have it be profitable. The problem comes when every group reads that research and uses that frequency.

Here's why: Most people give money to between five and eleven organizations. If each group sends twelve mailings annually, the average donor

is receiving 60 to 132 requests for money just from those groups. Add to this the mail generated by the groups trading names and renting names to other groups and it is easy to see why consumers have grown tired of direct-mail solicitations over the past ten years.

What the research cannot do is determine how many groups can ask the same donor for money 12 to 14 times a year before the donor gets tired. It seems from consumer complaints that donors feel they are being asked too often. Sometimes they react by not giving money to any groups that solicit by mail.

I recommend that organizations solicit their smaller donors—those giving under \$100—three times a year. (Donors giving over \$100 should be treated as major donors and asked in a more personal way.) Those three letters will fade into the number of appeals from groups asking more often, but they still keep the work of your group in front of the donor. Every time you ask your donor base for money, 10% of them will respond with a gift (while one or two will send you a letter complaining about how often you ask). In this phase, you make back the money you spend in phase 1, and probably show a profit.

### 3) Get donors to renew their gift

To be considered an active (rather than lapsed) donor, a person must give your group money at least once a year. This is what is meant by renewal gifts. Most organizations have a renewal rate of about 66%. Clearly, a 66% response to your mail over the course of a year generates a nice profit. If you have much more than a 66% renewal rate, it is a sign that you probably don't have enough donors. It is easy to maintain a 90% renewal rate from only a handful of very loyal donors. On the other hand, if you are losing much more than one-third of your donors, you are not doing enough to keep them, including asking them for money often enough. Asking once a year is not enough. □

zation's name in the upper left-hand corner. In either case, the prospect asks, "Who is this from?" and opens the envelope to find out.

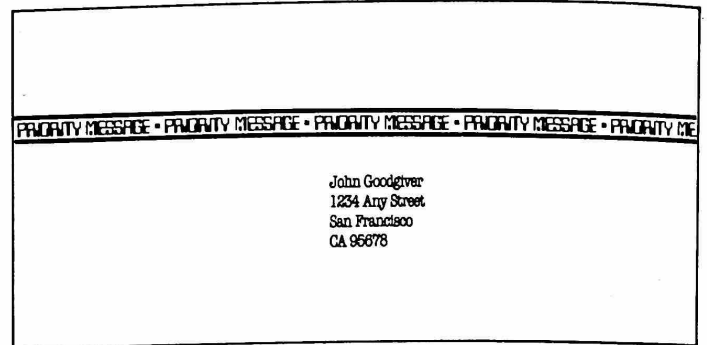
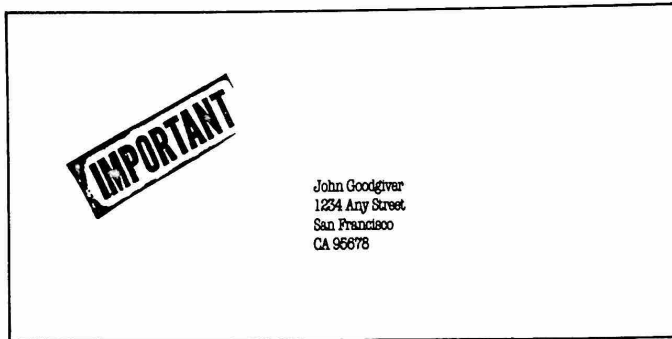
On the other hand, if you are in a rural area, it is likely that the people receiving your appeal will open all letters that originate in their county or small town. In that case, you want your return address to be fairly

prominent on the front of the envelope.

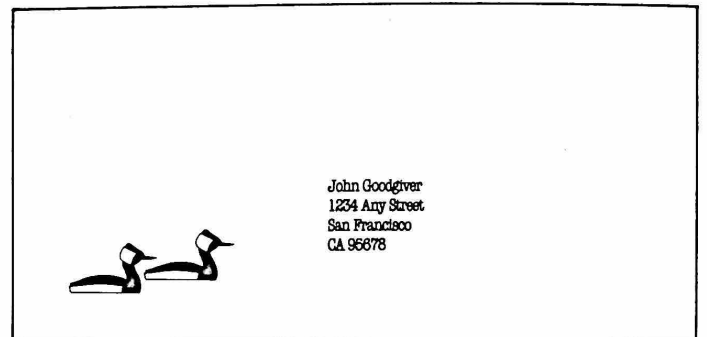
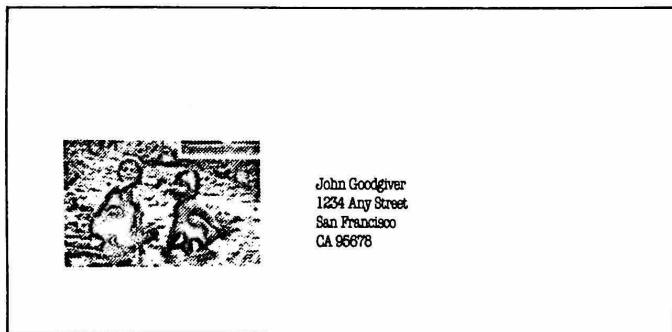
### *Look Different*

Most mail appeals are sent in standard business-size envelopes (called No. 10). Your appeal will stand out if it arrives in a smaller or an odd-size envelope. Personal let-

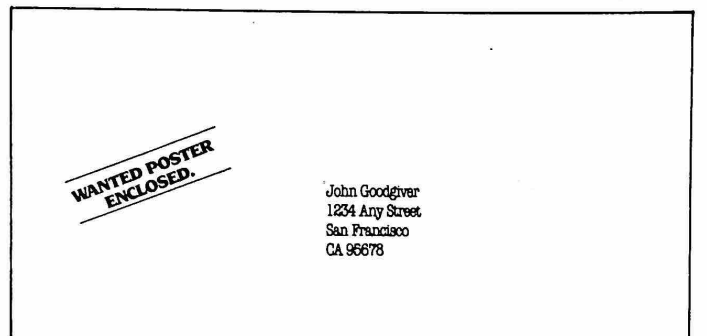
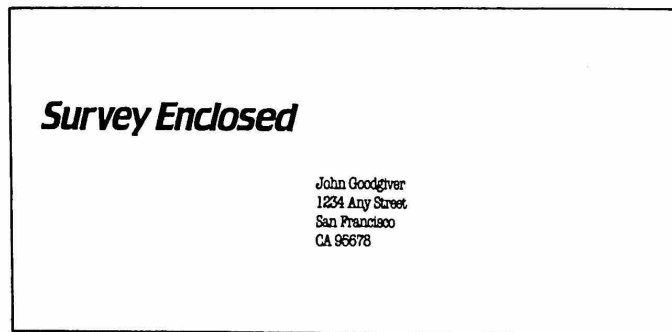
*Words & phrases, as well as the style of the graphic, give an impression of urgency:*



*Pictures or drawings are used extensively for children, animal or wilderness appeals:*



*Phrases that are "come-ons," promising something for nothing:*



*(These No. 10 envelopes are shown at 35% of their original size.)*

ters are not generally sent in business-size envelopes, so to make your appeal look more personal, send it in a No. 6 3/4 or No. 7 3/4, or in an invitation-style envelope. One word of caution: if you use small envelopes, make sure your return envelope is smaller yet, so that it will fit into the carrier envelope without needing to be folded.

The least effective strategy is "teaser copy." However, it should not be totally disregarded. "Teaser copy" involves writing, drawing or using a photograph on the envelope itself which intrigues the reader or causes some emotional response that will make them

open the envelope. So many direct mail appeals use it that it will not make your envelope stand out unless yours is very unusual. The examples below show the most common uses of teaser copy.

You may wish to experiment with various styles of outside envelopes to find which methods work best for your organization. Save mail appeals from other groups that you open, and figure out what about the envelope caused you to open it. The more creative you can be in designing the outside envelope, the greater chance you will have of the prospect reading your appeal. ■



# Seeking Corporate Support: *An Intelligent Approach*

by Nancy Wiltsek

*This article concludes a series of chapters reprinted with permission from Reversing the Flow, A Community Guide to Bay Area Corporate Giving Programs, edited by Nancy Johnson and published by Applied Research Center. For a complete copy of Reversing the Flow, contact the Center for Third World Organizing, 3861 Martin Luther King Dr., Oakland, CA 94609.*

**F**or community organizations looking for support from corporations, the most important (and most difficult) first step is to develop an understanding of how each company's giving program is organized. Corporate contributions programs vary widely. Some are administered through corporate foundations, while others are managed through company public affairs/community relations departments. Many corporate contributions, especially those of smaller, privately owned companies, are not made under the auspices of a formalized giving program, but are instead ad-hoc decisions made at the personal discretion of the chief executive officer (CEO).

Researching the prospect is a critical component of any fundraising plan. Finding out information on corporate giving programs, however, can be something of a challenge. This article offers a brief guide to some of the questions you need to ask yourself when planning to

solicit corporate support, and provides some general information on corporate giving programs.

## **What kind of support are you seeking?**

Companies make charitable contributions of cash, products and volunteer time. You need to know your organization's priorities, and then figure out what companies can best provide the type of support you need. What industry does the potential corporate donor represent? Is there a connection between their products or services and your organization's programs? Can you argue that the match between the prospective corporation and your organization is a good one? Can you argue the contribution will make good business sense?

## **How is the corporation's giving program organized?**

Is it a large company that has definite giving policies and accepts formal proposals? Or is it a small company that would most likely provide support in the amount of \$100 to \$1,000? Again, think about the level of support you are requesting. Are you asking for a small cash contribution, or a \$75,000 donation for a specific project? The former requires a personal solicitation, while the latter obviously demands a more formal proposal. Be-

ware of direct mail. In a recent study of CEOs of small, privately-owned companies, less than 15% indicated they would make a corporate contribution in response to a direct mail solicitation.

### **Is the corporation financially able to make a contribution?**

Did the company make money last year? What about the year before? Can you determine the company's pretax net income? Research has shown that as pretax net income increases, so do corporate charitable contributions. Financial information is published in the annual reports of publicly owned companies; information on privately owned companies is more difficult to find. Some information can be gleaned from the business section of your local newspaper. Some daily newspapers publish special "Top 100 Corporation" supplements that provide interesting background material on local companies.

### **What do you know about the company's giving history?**

Did the company make any charitable contributions last year? What about the year before? What charitable organizations has the company supported in the past? How much did the company give? What was the average donation? Among small, privately owned companies, total giving rarely exceeds \$10,000 annually. In fact, the majority give a total of less than \$2,000. This information is important when determining the level of support you are seeking.

The flip side of gathering information from the corporate donor is to research corporate support as reported by community organizations themselves. Many organizations publish the names of their individual and corporate contributors. See, for example, publications such as symphony, ballet, and opera programs, and community newsletters published by local museums and hospitals. Always be on the lookout for publicity about corporate gifts and/or sponsorship to get a feel for what types of companies give how much to whom. Also pay attention to who the large individual donors are. Many of them are CEOs or top managers of local corporations, and have considerable influence over their companies' giving programs.

### **Will a contribution provide the corporation with a sense of community involvement or exposure?**

These are common reasons for charitable giving by small companies. Among large companies, research shows CEOs have a strong commitment to corporate giving, based on the CEOs personal sense of ethics, a desire to maintain company tradition, and community need.

### **Who makes the giving decisions?**

The CEO wields the greatest influence with respect to contribution decisions. Among large companies with highly organized, professionalized giving programs, the CEO generally has an interest in the giving policies and direction of the program, if not in the actual decision-making process. You need to identify the key players in those companies you plan to solicit.

Among smaller companies, the CEO is the key decision maker, responsible for all contribution decisions

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*Figure out what companies can best provide the type of support you need.*

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including setting the total giving budget, identifying beneficiaries and determining individual gift size. Three factors likely to influence the CEO of a small company to authorize a donation are first, a request from a friend or colleague, second, experience and/or familiarity with the soliciting organization, and third, whether the company had made a previous donation to the soliciting organization. Therefore, when soliciting smaller companies you need to ask: Who is the CEO? What are his/her interests? Who on your organization's board or staff knows him/her?

Research is the critical component to raising corporate funds. Learn everything you can about the company you plan to solicit and about corporate giving in general. Use the resources available in the community, especially your local Foundation Center. Use the *Taft Corporate Giving Directory: Comprehensive Profiles of America's Major Corporate Foundations and Corporate Charitable Giving Programs* to collect information on the 500 largest programs in the country. More importantly, avail yourself of various publications that deal with giving programs, including the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, *Corporate Philanthropy Report*, *Non-profit Times* and *Foundation News*.

Your attempts to raise corporate support will be successful if you do your research thoroughly and approach each prospect with an intelligent, clear request. Be specific about what you want, and why you want it. Make sure your request meets the guidelines and/or interests of the company or CEO you are soliciting. Most important, be polite and be professional. ■

*Nancy Wiltsek, is a member of the Program Advisory Council of the Institute for Nonprofit Organization Management at the University of San Francisco.*





# The Bowl-A-Thon

by Lucy Gruett

**M**y organization, a small not-for-profit self-defense and martial arts school, has had success over the past 10 years with the Bowl-a-thon—the bowling spin on that venerable fundraising standby, the \_\_\_\_\_-a-thon.

For an organization like ours, with a small paid staff but a large pool of volunteers, the Bowl-a-thon works well for several reasons. First, it requires very little organizing from the “top.” Second, the more people who participate, the more money can be raised. With about 40 people bowling, our most successful Bowl-a-thon took in over \$3,800. Third, the event can cost almost nothing to put on, which is a real plus, since expenses for many fundraising events too often take a huge bite out of the money raised.

Here is how the Bowl-a-thon works. Before the scheduled day of bowling, people solicit contributions, either on a “per-pin” basis or as a lump sum. Lump sums can be collected before or after bowling. A per-pin pledge is collected after bowling, when the pledge is multiplied by the bowler’s score. (We usually choose the high score from two games, but other methods of calculating scores—like combining two games—can be tried.) For example, a 10-cent-per-pin pledge multiplied by a score of 95 figures out to a contribution of \$9.50.

We find that the novelty of a Bowl-a-thon makes soliciting contributions more fun and less intimidating to volunteers than more traditional campaigns to ask for money. Once they have learned to ask for small contributions from co-workers, relatives, neighbors, merchants, etc. for a Bowl-a-thon, pitching for larger amounts—

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*The event can cost almost nothing to put on, which is a real plus.*

---

perhaps through a major donor campaign—can be less daunting.

Because bowling is an activity that many people have at least some passing experience with, it’s easy to get a lot of people in your group participating in this event. For those who have never bowled, the rudiments are usually picked up easily, and bowling is fun even for the most unskilled player. Kids enjoy it, too.

The day of the Bowl-a-thon offers a nice way for members of an organization to get to know one another better, hanging out in the informal atmosphere of a bowling alley and pulling together for a cause all believe in.

For those of us in seasonal climates, the Bowl-a-thon is not dependent on good weather as are outdoor fundraising events or events that the public is attending. Therefore, we like to do it in the winter and so raise some income during what would otherwise be a slow time of year.

## How To Do It

If you think the Bowl-a-thon is something your group would like to try, these are the steps involved.

1. *Secure a bowling alley.* Many alleys here in New

York City are tied up with leagues, so we make reservations a couple of months in advance; you may not need so much lead time. If you ask, the alley might donate the cost of games as a contribution. Usually, they will at least throw in the shoe rental. Here in New York, games cost about \$1.50, and we ask our members to pay if the alley will not donate the fees.

When making reservations, we figure on five people to a lane because our group is usually large—40 to 50—so we need to be that crowded. But the game moves more quickly and so is more fun with only four to a lane. (Two games, with five people per lane, take about two hours.)

2. *Circulate pledge sheets and "how to" instructions.* We like to give about six weeks for people to collect pledges before the event. With more time it feels like momentum is lost; less time has the obvious drawback of not allowing people to reach as many folks as they might. When to hand out pledge sheets and instructions will vary from group to group and depend on factors such as how often you meet and how experienced your group is with soliciting.

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*We have found this an  
effective way to expand our  
donor base.*

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Pledge sheets should keep track of the contributors' names, the amounts pledged per pin (or lump-sum amount), and the total collected. We also ask members to collect contributors' addresses and phone numbers so that we can send them a thank-you note and also add them to our mailing list for future solicitations. In the constant struggle to find new supporters, we have found this an effective way to expand our donor base.

Instructions should explain the rudiments of the Bowl-a-thon and outline the pledge options: per-pin, which must be collected after the score, or lump-sum, which can be collected before or after bowling takes place. We also include a couple of sample pitches, including why we are a terrific organization that they should support and what their contributions will pay for.

Include on the instruction hand-out the date of the event, the bowling alley's address and phone number, the cost of participating (if bowlers must pay for games and/or shoes), and the names and phone numbers of the event's organizers.

3. *Inspire members to collect pledges.* This is the key, of course, to a successful event, and the organizers' main task. Again, depending on how often volunteers connect to the group (weekly or monthly meetings, daily classes, etc.) this will vary, but momentum must build to the day of the event. We have a sign-up poster at the office where bowlers add their names and the number of

sponsors they have. Sometimes we do phone trees to urge people on. But of course the biggest motivator is that members/volunteers believe in the organization and want to help raise money to support it.

4. *On the day of . . .* One or two organizers are needed for the day's event, depending on the size of the group. Confirm your reservation with the alley the week before. As members arrive, assign them to lanes; when a lane has the required number of bowlers, they can begin to play. The organizer can collect bowling fees from everyone, or she can assign a lane leader to take charge of each group.

We like to do inexpensive, funny prizes to add to the group's pleasure and also as an excuse to bring folks together, thank them for coming out and exhort them to go out and collect those pledges. Entertaining categories have been most original form, most enthusiastic bowler, best dressed, and, more mundane, highest score.

5. *Keep momentum going after the bowling day.* Bowlers now need to go back to their sponsors and collect money. As a quick visual inspiration and reminder, we keep a poster that measures the amount of money collected, with the goal at top. We have started recently to put a closing date for collection of contributions (six weeks after the event, or so) because in some years money has trickled in for months.

6. *After pledges have been collected,* ask bowlers to turn in their pledge sheets, so that contributors can receive a thank-you note. We tell members that we will be adding their sponsors to our mailing list so they will receive our annual appeal solicitation letter. If a bowler does not want a contributor to be solicited by mail in the future, she tells us. However, many who first gave through the Bowl-a-thon are now ongoing supporters of our organization.

To thank those who have raised the most money or accrued the greatest number of sponsors, we award a couple of grand prizes after all contributions are collected. But all members should, of course, be thanked for making the Bowl-a-thon a success.

The Bowl-a-thon is the most solid of our fundraising events. It consistently raises substantial amounts of money and continues to attract large numbers of participants. Because it does not drain staff or financial resources from the organization, it has not burned us out as have other events that are more onerous and expensive to mount.

So if you are looking for a novel and relatively easy event, try a Bowl-a-thon. Maybe it will become a steady and well-loved fundraiser for your group, too. ■

*Lucy Gruette is the Associate Director of the Center for Anti-Violence Education/Brooklyn Women's Martial Arts, a not-for-profit school teaching self-defense and martial arts to women and children since 1974.*



## KIM KLEIN: REPORT FROM THE ROAD

October 28, 1992

I am writing from Perth, Western Australia. Since my last report, Stephanie and I have visited and worked with NGOs (nonprofits) in Vanuatu and in six cities in Australia.

Vanuatu is made up of dozens of islands in the South Pacific just south of the Solomon Islands. (If you have an old map, the country will be named the New Hebrides.) Teaching fundraising here was a challenge for two reasons: first the whole notion of nonprofit organizations is foreign to Melanesian culture; and second, although Vanuatu is moving toward a cash economy, outside the capital of Port Vila many people and villages do not use or need cash at all.

We started each workshop by acknowledging that although our fundraising techniques work with all kinds of groups and settings in the U.S., we had no reason to believe they would work elsewhere. In fact, we continued, we were fairly confident that most of what we had to teach would have to be adapted and modified in order to be successful in their country. Therefore, we told participants, since they would have to do that adapting, they needed to speak up during the workshop every time they thought something wouldn't work.

This was not a simple request. In Melanesian culture it is considered rude to disagree, particularly with your teachers. But we worked very hard and to a great extent succeeded in making it polite to disagree. We wound up having spirited discussions and discovered that a lot of our fundraising principles were practiced there.

Some of the strongest cultural differences concerned the meaning of giving and receiving. In Melanesian villages, people get power by what they *give* rather than by what they *have* and what they *control*. So the chief of the village will be the man (invariably) who has given the most. Giving can include things or favors. Each gift obligates the person who receives it to the person who gave it. (Similarly, tipping and begging are highly frowned on because they obligate the receiver to the giver. Tourists

are asked not to tip, and we were told that the country has no beggars.)

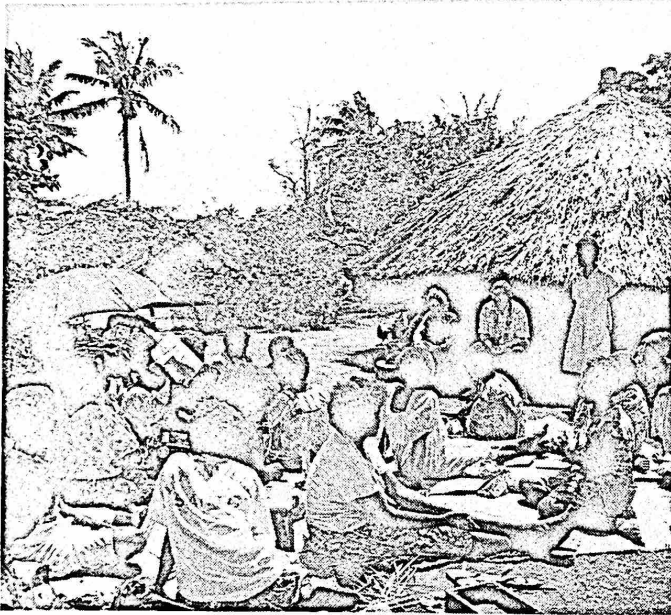
The cultural norms around giving ease the way for fundraising, but the norms about receiving mean that a group has to be very clear about the work it does and ensure that the donor feels repaid for his or her gift by that work. A group would be reluctant to ask for a gift if they felt their debt to the giver went beyond their work.

A further complication is that it is considered rude to say no, so the group is under restraint to ask only for things or money they know a person could and would want to give. The principles of prospect research and knowing your prospect were well received and easily understood for this reason.

Finally, there is the logistical problem of the lack of a cash economy outside the capital city, so a group has to be able to accept contributions in taro root, kava (a mild narcotic drink used widely), baskets, mats and the like.

### *Aiding Who?*

There is a lot of international aid available, and while some is excellent, much of it seems like something out of a bad movie. For example, most villages in Vanuatu now have concrete floors for a "VIP" toilet, which is a prefabricated outhouse. (Villages have no running water and people use a predesignated part of the bush for their toilet.) However, there is no further help for installing them or teaching people how to maintain them, so these huge pieces of concrete with toilet holes in them sit, rapidly becoming covered with vines. In another example, a sewing machine scheme gave a sewing machine to almost every woman in Vanuatu. (Ni-Vanuatu have only recently begun to wear clothes.) But the machines were distributed without thread, cloth, or parts or expertise to fix them. They now sit rusting in the thatch houses of many villagers. There is some effort to salvage the project by the National Council of Women, which is using the chance to teach sewing workshops as an opportunity to



*Kim Klein (right) and Stephanie Roth, seated, discuss income-generating ideas with women attending a sewing workshop. Martha (standing, right), who works for the Tanna Council of Women, translated.*

get women together to discuss problems and issues.

These two examples are perhaps minor and silly in the overall scheme of development, but they represent some of the problems of poorly conceived aid projects.

Much more serious are the attitudes and plans of the major sources of development money, the most notorious of which is the World Bank. Lawrence Summers, World Bank vice-president and chief economist, referring to the changes in eastern Europe and the former USSR, stated at last year's World Bank Annual Meeting in Bangkok, "What can the West do to drive this process of reform forward? Number one, it can spread the truth. The laws of economics, it is often forgotten, are like the laws of engineering—there is only one set of laws and they work everywhere." To fully appreciate his understanding of the laws of economics, one need only look at the content of a Summers memo leaked by World Bank staff in which he said there was "economic logic" in dumping toxic waste in the Third World. In a low-wage country, he explained, people are going to die earlier and not have time to develop the types of cancer that such waste can cause. A person in a low-wage country, Summers argued, might earn \$500 a year and have 10 years left to live, whereas in a high-wage country, a person might earn \$50,000 a year and have 20 years to live and so would be contributing much more to the gross world product and to economic growth. According to Summers, you should put the pollution where the lower value is.

Although Vanuatu has not yet been hit with large-scale World Bank-inspired schemes, with vast and relatively untapped resources, including dozens of unpopulated islands, we fear it is only a matter of time.

### ***Community Aid Abroad***

In contrast, Community Aid Abroad (CAA), for whom we are doing fundraising trainings in eight cities in Australia, represents a positive view of the possibilities of development. CAA is a leftist funder of self-development projects around the world. Using only local people as field officers, they fund projects that address the root causes of poverty.

CAA has recently merged with a famine relief agency, Freedom from Hunger; together they are a \$15 million (US) operation. They raise most of their money from direct mail and very large special events (one is a nationwide all-volunteer canvass that goes on for two weeks and nets over \$1 million).

They now want to move into the world of major donors and we have been teaching asking for money in person and prospect identification all over Australia, a country as large as the continental U.S. but with only 16 million people.

Here we have encountered resistance based on perceived differences in culture that are really amusing. Many people have found the idea of keeping track of information about prospects offensive, saying it invades privacy. Several people have commented that Americans don't have a concept of privacy and talk openly about money, including their salaries and what they paid for things. "In Australia, we don't talk about money like that," they say, "We really don't talk about it at all."

Another perception is that "Americans like asking for money and are accustomed to it. Asking and giving are a way of life there, but not here."

They are surprised and skeptical when we explain that we fight these same battles in the United States.

CAA/Freedom is one of the most sophisticated groups Stephanie and I have ever worked with. In addition to their direct fundraising, they have a small business called CAA Trading, which sells products made in the Third World by co-ops and producer groups (similar to "Pueblo to People"). This nets \$1 million. They also have their own travel agency, One World Travel, and run an ethical investment firm.

Despite their size, CAA/Freedom's philosophy is based on grassroots principles. They have hundreds of volunteers and their paid staff earn very modest salaries—a low of \$20,000 (US) to a high of \$42,000 for the director.

As with our travels in the Caribbean, we are learning at least as much as we are teaching. Our next report will be from Indonesia and Thailand. ■

# Profile of a Major Donor Couple

by Kim Klein

The identities of donors profiled in this column have always been altered to protect their anonymity. However, the context of their stories remains true: their marital status, type of community they live in, etc. Trying to guess their identities is probably futile; no one who has asked me has ever been correct. These profiles are of people I meet in my fundraising or training work or on airplanes, at parties or other events. Some of them don't even know they will appear—suitably disguised—here.

This couple lives in a beautiful town facing the Rocky Mountains. He is 75, a retired civil servant. She is 70 and has never worked outside the home. They have two sons, now grown, who live on the West Coast. The wife inherited \$15,000 from her mother in 1970, which the couple invested, always reinvesting the earnings. Over the years, through conservative investments in Treasury Bills, Certificates of Deposit, and long-term bonds, they have parlayed that \$15,000 into \$100,000. For the past five years, they have given away the interest and dividends they earned on the investment, around \$6,000 a year.

This couple describes themselves as "old-time Republicans." They voted for Nixon, but have not voted Republican since. They find both political parties "ridiculous and incompetent" but follow the electoral process quite avidly and make a point of meeting candidates for School Board, City Council and other local elections.

This couple gives to a wide variety of animal rights, environmental, pro-choice, and senior citizen advocacy groups. They prefer to give to small organizations working lo-

cally. Before they decided to give away the interest on their investments, they were not big givers. "Before I retired, we maybe gave away \$200 a year, and felt like that was a lot," the husband reported. "We were saving for retirement and to create a nest egg for our sons. After I retired, our sons said, 'We don't need your money. Spend it and enjoy it.' Also, my pension was more than I had planned. So we decided to give away the interest on the savings we had built from the original inheritance."

She adds, "My mother was a giver. She gave money, time, clothes, whatever she could. As a child, I hated it and felt like I had little enough while Mother gave away our money. I never appreciated the importance of her giving while she was alive, and I still believe that 'Charity Begins At Home.' However, I look around now and see that if we don't send our little bit to help, things are not going to exist at all. The government is too busy racking up debt and building missiles to care, and corporations just want to have no laws apply to them, so it is us—John Q. Citizen—that has to do everything decent. I think now that my mother realized that

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## Announcement

After fifteen years and 75,000 copies sold, there is a new, updated version of *The Grass Roots Fundraising Book* by Joan Flanagan. This classic has been used to raise everything from \$200 to buy the first ballot box for Round Mountain, Texas, to more than \$10 million to build affordable housing on the West Side of Chicago.

The 1992 edition includes many new fundraising techniques such as computers and credit cards as well as foolproof favorites like dues and dances.

The new edition of *The Grass Roots Fundraising Book* is available from your bookseller for \$14.95 or from Contemporary Books, 180 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60601. For information on a special bulk order discount available to non-profit organizations only, call Deborah Ferguson at (312) 782-9181 or fax (312) 782-3987. ■

years ago, and so I am happy that we have her money to give away now.”

They make their giving decisions jointly, and mostly they respond to direct mail or recommendations from their sons. “Our older son is very involved in social change work,” she explained. “I don’t agree with all of it. Some of it goes too far, but he is smart and I usually ask him if he knows about groups before we give to them.”

I asked if their giving priorities had changed over the past five years. He replied, “We used to give entirely to environmental causes. Then we took on some economic development and some peace organizations at the suggestion of our older son. Now we give to pro-choice and advocacy groups as well.”

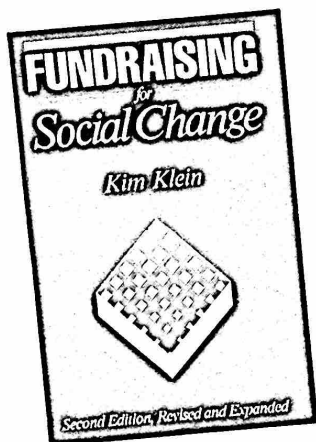
Recently they have decided to concentrate their giving into two or

three large gifts that address and counter the work of the religious right. “Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, Randall Terry, and the like are the scariest men to me,” she said. “They want the government in every aspect of our lives, and their intolerance and self-righteousness, along with the money they raise, make them a force to be reckoned with. I think we are in a period similar to Germany before the second World War, and these people are the new Nazis,” she says. He nods his head vigorously and takes up the line of thought, “Take this homosexual thing. They harp on it—you’d think we were surrounded by gay people whose only goal was to bite us. Sometimes I want to laugh at them—what are they so afraid of? Gay or straight is no one’s business and the government needs to lay off trying to legislate who people can

fall in love with.” But they looked surprised when I asked if they give to any gay rights groups. “We don’t want to promote that kind of thing,” they said almost in unison. “We just don’t want to have laws about it one way or the other,” she amended.

These donors are an example of people whom social change activists often overlook. They are old-fashioned conservatives, with a strong sense of the appropriate role for government. Though they are disillusioned in very fundamental ways with the electoral process and with the possibility for any real change, they continue to be involved and to give away money. There are large numbers of older people like them who have tremendous giving potential. Much more effort needs to be spent on bringing people like them into the broad social justice movement. ■

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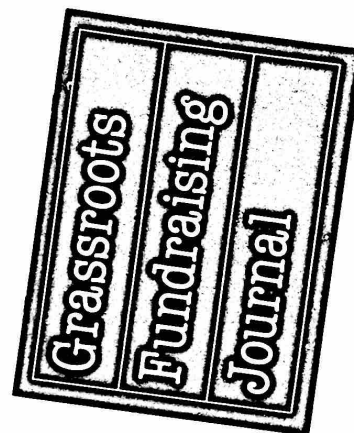
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