

# NONPROFIT ROUNDTABLE

As a new crop of employees start to spring up, and the baby boomer generation slowly begins steering toward retirement, we spoke with the region's top nonprofit leaders and asked them their thoughts on the changing landscape in philanthropy and what trends they see in the future of giving. For the 2016 Tax & Financial Planning Guide, the Business Times corresponded with Bonnie Atmore of Food Share, Vanessa Bechtel of the Ventura County Community Foundation, Jim McGee from American Red Cross Central California Region, and Steve Ortiz of United Way of Santa Barbara County. Here we let them explain in their own words the outlook of the region's nonprofit sector. In a few cases, responses were edited or shortened to fit the space available.

**By Chris Officer**  
Staff Writer

**1) What changes have you seen in philanthropy as millennials start entering the workforce and start taking over their family businesses? How do you think their philanthropy will differ from their baby boomer parents?**

• **Atmore:** What I see changed is a perspective and behavior that is centered on their intentional desire to matter and serve beyond their own needs, while ensuring their own wants are also fulfilled. They believe that they have the ability to impact a shared issue in their own unique way.

The millennial workforce wants to be recognized and rewarded for their service-above-self behavior. They expect others around them; friends, co-workers, the businesses and companies they spend money and time on will also do their part to behave in. Millennials look at the landscape and what are the shared issues they want to support, be recognized for, and compensated for.

• **Bechtel:** My experience is that millennials reject the notion of a divide between business and philanthropy. Instead, they contribute together in mass incrementally throughout their daily lives. They embrace the notion of paying more for products manufactured in socially responsible ways and demonstrate a strong commitment to living their values. Millennials are avid volunteers and leverage their wallets via collective commerce to cross borders and boundaries previously limited by the location of a few very philanthropic individuals.

Their approach affords many companies the opportunity to become a force for good while generating meaningful profits. This in turn, leads to philanthropy being more sustainable, farther-reaching, and scalable.

• **McGee:** Our experience is that millennials desire to have a "hands on role" in the causes they choose to support. Before supporting a cause financially, often times there is a need to engage in service and experience the impact first-hand. We value this approach as we believe investing time, talents, and resources will result in a greater opportunity for loyalty and sustained support.

We also find that the millennials and Gen X generations have different standards for engagement. At Red Cross, these standards keep us current and focused on providing meaningful and efficient ways for volunteers to engage. Whereas boomers may have more time, time is a high-demand resource for millennials and Gen-Xers and as a volunteer organization we have to respect and steward time well.

• **Ortiz:** Millennials tend to support specific targeted innovative programs and initiatives and not necessarily the organization that produces those programs. A recent national foundation report concluded that the top three factors that motivate millennials to get involved in a cause are passion, meeting people and enhancing their expertise.

Millennials do engage in financial contributions, especially through social media and online giving sites. However, millennials also see advocacy as an equal, if not greater, form of philanthropy. They appreciate the opportunity to educate others about a cause that is important to them.

**2) Meanwhile, the baby boomer generation is beginning to retire and think about the future. What emerging trends to you see in their philanthropy?**

• **McGee:** We have a very dedicated volunteer

## MEET the PANELISTS



**Bonnie Atmore**  
President, CEO  
Food Share

Bonnie Atmore is the president and CEO of Food Share, Ventura County's regional food bank. Under her leadership, Food Share has grown to serve more than 74,500 people each month with the help of 150 partner agencies and a team of 29 staff members and 320 volunteers. Atmore is also vice president of the California Women in Agriculture Ventura County chapter and a Ventura County Community Foundation board director. Atmore has secured and grown donations and partnerships and manages an operating budget of \$3.8 million while establishing a long-term plan to expand the organization's reach.



**Vanessa Bechtel**  
CEO  
Ventura County Community Foundation

Vanessa Bechtel serves as president & CEO of the Ventura County Community Foundation, where she oversees \$137 million in charitable assets. In 2015, VCCF awarded \$1.2 million in scholarships to local students and just over \$4 million in grants to local nonprofit organizations. Prior to her work with VCCF, Bechtel served as executive director of the Santa Barbara City College Foundation, one of the most highly regarded community college foundations in the nation. She co-founded Monarch Wealth Strategies in 2008 and was honored as Business Woman of the Year by the Santa Barbara Chamber of Commerce in 2010.



**Jim McGee**  
CEO  
American Red Cross Central California Region

As CEO, Jim McGee oversees a team of staff and volunteers that delivers the mission of American Red Cross along the Central Coast of California. His career began at The Walt Disney Company, serving in a variety of management roles. Most recently, McGee held executive roles in corporate strategy and corporate development at WellPoint.

He received his undergraduate degree in economics from Wheaton College and a master's in business administration from USC, where he continues to be active as a mentor to business school students.



**Steve Ortiz**  
Executive Vice President, Chief Operating Officer  
United Way of Santa Barbara County

Steve Ortiz is executive vice president and chief operating officer for United Way of Santa Barbara County. Since 2005, Ortiz has spearheaded United Way of Santa Barbara County's corporate, workplace and residential development, marketing, strategic planning, volunteer management and the launch of the Young Leaders Society. He received his bachelor's degree at UC Santa Barbara and earned his master's degree in business administration at California Lutheran University. Before joining United Way, Ortiz was the financial manager for the Devereux Foundation.

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## NONPROFITS

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workforce consisting of baby boomers. Connecting this generations' work ethic, loyalty, and commitment to service with staff and volunteers from other generations is a tremendous gift to others and an advantage for a multi-generational organization like our American Red Cross. We anticipate that boomers will continue to give consistently to several organizations, but perhaps at smaller levels as they balance other demands such as aging parents, supporting family members, and extending retirement funds over longer life spans.

• **Ortiz:** As we have for the past five years, we will continue to see the total number of charitable gifts reduce slightly while the total dollars donated will increase. This higher average gift trend comes from boomers who are legacy-minded and have the capacity.

The much-discussed \$10 trillion transfer of wealth has been much smaller and slower than first forecasted almost 10 years ago. We believe that economic uncertainty of the next four years will have retiring boomers holding onto a higher percentage of their wealth for longer periods.

• **Bechtel:** Baby boomers want to stamp out a problem, like ending poverty or curing cancer. At the same time, they understand their assets are tiny relative to the scale of the problems they want to solve. Many also worry about what to do in retirement.

I think these factors work together to inspire a focus on building great nonprofit organizations and inviting friends to join them in their efforts. Boomers tend to be social with their philanthropy.

I also think boomers are becoming more focused on their top one or two issues, instead of giving small gifts to many organizations.

• **Atmore:** What a beautiful time for baby boomers. To inherit resources that their parents socked away allows them to utilize their family's investments in a way that benefits others for generations to come. That is the MO of the baby boomers. They think about living with less, knowing they can be stable thriving citizens but at the same time take the wealth they inherited and earned and put it to work to positively impact a cause, project or organization. They want to personally be engaged in the philanthropic investments they make, and they want to see the good they made possible in their lifetime. That is the ROI that most matters to them, social impact investing. We love it.

3) **We've seen a lot of attention paid to inequality and we know a lot of families in the Tri-Counties are struggling. What are the top two or three priorities for your organization with regard to aid for the disadvantaged?**

• **Bechtel:** Philanthropy emerged strongly in the U.S. when successful business owners and entrepreneurs realized that their efforts to boost profits had an un-

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Vanessa Bechtel  
CEO

Ventura County Community  
Foundation

intended but damaging consequence of enhancing income inequality. Andrew Carnegie wrote about this in the “Gospel of Wealth,” touting the advantages of giving money away for the benefit of public good to prevent the gap from widening too far.

At VCCF we work with philanthropists who have resolved to alleviate the impact of inequality by taking action and maintaining an active interest in the lives of others.

Personally, I like programs such as STEAM, designed to improve science, technology, engineering, art, and math education that will make more students employable and fuel innovation and job creation.

• **Ortiz:** United Way of Santa Barbara County's unique programs and initiatives offer a continuum of integrated services that improve education, financial empowerment, and health for thousands of local community members from the day they are born until the final days of their life, and everywhere in between. These priorities were set based upon the results of a two-year listening process involving 6,000 residents, and more than 200 organizations and 100 elected officials.

For example, United Way developed Fun in the Sun. FITS is a national award-winning summer learning collaborative involving more than 60 service delivery partners, 19 funding partners, and over 500 volunteers. Each year, FITS serves approximately 250 children and 150 parents at five Santa Barbara County sites. During the summer session, FITS provides a comprehensive, integrated network of services to reduce and reverse summer learning loss and narrow the achievement gap between low income children and their middle to upper income peers.

• **Atmore:** To create awareness about the tremendous number of friends and neighbors that are food insecure. Inspire and invite all sectors of the community to come to the table to solve hunger. Empower food insecure friends and provide a pathway. The connecting dots that bring stability to their households, giving them an opportunity to create their own pathway to prosperity.

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### 4) Homelessness has been the subject of many reports and studies. Is there anything that you have found that really works?

• **Bechtel:** Prevention is the best strategy. After that, programs that promote self-sufficiency stand the biggest chance of really working. Just like the rest of us, our homeless need opportunity, work, appropriate training, education and support along the way.

We must be careful to utilize every dollar as efficiently as possible because support services are dramatically cut back (as we saw in 2008) in tough times, and this is arguably the period of time we will need those resources most.

Finally, I believe supporting the Legal Aid Foundation and their work to fight policies and practices that criminalize homelessness is vital as well.

• **Atmore:** Food Share is deeply engaged in research, strategies and approaches to stabilize our most vulnerable. Hunger alleviation efforts are a proven strategic and effective way to mitigate homelessness. We declared the war on poverty more than 50 years ago. Food Share's board partnered with funders, volunteers and supporters committing ourselves to place the food insecure friends we serve in the center of our mission to solve hunger.

By empowering and supporting those we serve we have the best chances of "shortening the line" bringing stability back to these families, thus positively impacting our neighborhoods, our communities and region in a way that benefits us all.

• **Ortiz:** There have been several multi-agency, public and private efforts attempted in the past five years. Some are showing some progress in certain political, geographical and demographical communities. No community has found the silver-bullet answer.

Homelessness is a multi-layered, multi-dimensional problem with no easy answers. Certainly, to make a large step of improvement will involve larger regional efforts. To think that any one city can find an answer as an island surrounded by a Southern California of homelessness is not realistic. Incremental testing of selected national best practices and measuring results is probably this area's next best steps.

### 5) If your organization could pick one issue for 2017 and focus on it what would it be? And what would be some of the top priorities?

• **Atmore:** Give a voice and face to our food insecure. Solving hunger is not a challenge that Food Share can tackle alone — it's a community wide effort that requires the support and partnership of many individuals, businesses and organizations across the region.

A significant meal gap still remains here in the region and nation. By illumi-

nating and modeling triple bottom line practices in each of our own businesses and communities, we impact our environment, our own pocket books, the quality of life for our neighbors and the economy of the region. Just like the drought and saving water, food insecurity is a shared issue that we can all impact and can solve by embracing that this is a shared issue and by changing a few of our day-to-day behaviors and approaches.

• **Ortiz:** Some of the top issues would be education, and improving literacy skills in reading, writing and math.

Researchers have found that there is a direct correlation between students' ability to read at or above grade level and their ability to graduate high school on time, college and career ready. In fact, researchers have identified third-grade literacy (in addition to sixth, ninth, and eleventh grade literacy) as a key indicator for high school graduation. In Santa Barbara County, 65 percent of third grade students did not meet English and language arts standards measured on the new 2016 Common Core standards-aligned CA Assessment of Student Performance & Progress test. Among economically disadvantaged students, that number jumps to 76 percent.

Recent educational data like this has only highlighted UWSBC's sense of urgency in improving literacy skills in Santa Barbara County readers of all ages and abilities. Improving reading fluency, comprehension and vocabulary skills will not only assist with students' test scores; these improvements will also significantly expand their opportunities to continue with higher education, their choice of careers and their life outcomes across the board.

To address academic underachievement in Santa Barbara County, UWSBC has developed over a dozen innovative educational partnerships. One specific example is United for Literacy.

• **McGee:** Recruiting, training and mobilizing our volunteer workforce to carry out this work is the heart of our success — so investing in people so that we can invest in our communities is our priority over the next year.

• **Bechtel:** We are helping our donors make an impact on a wide range of issues — education, mental health, environmental issues, curing diseases, providing access to playground equipment for children with special needs, supporting veterans and services, and so much more.

Given the recent changes we've made to become more sustainable by reducing overhead and other administrative expenses, I believe all organizations can benefit from a greater degree of security and strategic focus as well.

### 6) There has been a lot of volatility in the markets and that seems to have had a big impact on philanthropy. How do you think the results of the election will impact your donors and their philanthropy?

• **Bechtel:** The one thing we can count on is that the markets will go up and down.

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For over 10 years we've become used to increasing uncertainty and volatility. But, I'm not worried about a big impact on philanthropy. My experience taught me in 2008 that those that give will continue to give and may actually give more when they learn of the challenges their neighbors and fellow community members are facing.

For those organizations launching major initiatives or campaigns, my main recommendation is to remain vigilant, focused and flexible.

At VCCF, we build our budgets expecting market volatility, which is why

we adopt a smoothing period to spread out investment returns and also account for a potential flux of over two standard deviations in any given year.

• **McGee:** Now that the election is over we are hoping that donors will have more funds to give to local non-profit organizations such as ours.

We are also hopeful that a shift in media coverage away from the presidential campaign will reground us in the real needs and issues facing our communities.

While we are in a time of uncertainty with somewhat of a divided nation due to the recent election and its results, individuals are afraid about impacts to the

economy which may impact financial giving.

I believe it continues to come down to helping people see the impact they can make locally, nationally, or international. Volunteerism is so incredibly powerful. As an organization committed to volunteers, we continue to have the opportunity to create great volunteer experiences where people can see the direct impact of their contributions — both big and small. Experience this impact, coupled with a trust in an organization, is the foundation for sustained financial support.

• **Atmore:** Honestly, I feel hopeful. When there is such a disruption in a market and

in our lives, we have the opportunity to embrace the “falling apart” for what it is and what it can teach us. Give one another the benefit of the doubt. Those that make it possible for us to serve want the very same things that those we serve do.

While we may have different ideas of how to get there, for the most part we all want the same thing. We all want a safe place to sleep at night, enough food to eat and an opportunity to thrive. We are so more alike than different in this region and across the nation. We all have a place at the table, we all want to matter, and we all want to be a part of that larger story that says I purposely invested my time, my money, and my heart to ensure we all get a fair chance at being part of this story as our best self.

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