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CHARITY VS. PHILANTHROPY

Have you ever paused to consider the difference between the meaning of *charity* and *philanthropy*? Webster's Dictionary suggests that charity is "something given to help the needy; alms", "an institution, organization, or fund established to help the needy", or "benevolence or generosity toward others or toward humanity".

On the other hand, philanthropy is defined as "the effort or inclination to increase the well-being of humankind, as by charitable aid or donations", "love of humankind in general", or "something, such as an activity or institution, intended to promote human welfare".

In reading the two definitions, they would not seem, at first glance, to be very different, but the first definition of charity seems to be the one differentiator between the two. Today, charity seems to be more an act of giving something to the needy as opposed to philanthropy which seems to take on a much broader and more impactful meaning.

Done well, philanthropy can have enormously beneficial effects. Witness the past achievements of Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller and the present achievements of Bill and Melinda Gates, Sergey Brin and Larry Page of Google or most recently Gordon and Betty Moore of Intel who, according to Business Week, have surpassed the Gates in giving over the last five years. These men, during the last 100 years have made a real difference in the world.

There is a new enthusiasm for philanthropy which may have been fueled by the slow steady retreat of government from the subsidy of welfare and public reform programs. Increasingly, non-profit organizations are finding themselves "short" as a result of the decrease in federal and state funds for their programs. As a result, they are looking to private donors, corporations and foundations for the funds they need to keep their doors open.

None of this is new news. However, in our role as a capacity builder in the community, we encourage donors to look at their charitable giving, and make the differentiation between practicing charity, which is ultimately the concept of giving away just enough to provide an organization with something to help keep the doors open. Or preferably, to

practice philanthropy where you chose to make an investment in an organization for which you passionate, enabling them to sustain the quality services that they provide, perhaps well into the future.

Where would we be if Andrew Carnegie had only purchased a few books, rather than building the library, or if John D. Rockefeller had not endowed the institutions that still exist today. Philanthropy is an lifelong practice, that if done well, can impact the life of the man next door, a whole community, perhaps even the next generation.

Take a look at your charitable giving ...are you practicing charity or philanthropy?