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Opinion, Analysis, Insight



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CEO
Second Harvest Food Bank



Lucy Santana
CEO
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Nicole Suydam
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Don Thompson
Executive Director
Thompson Family Foundation

2021 Philanthropy Forecast: Stronger Together as Long Winter Looms

In response to the myriad challenges of 2020, individuals and organizations in Orange County and across the country have stepped up in unprecedented ways. U.S. donations rose by 7.5% in 2020 and the total number of new donors grew by 12.6%, according to the Fundraising Effectiveness Project.

Here in Orange County, we witnessed even more inspiring trends. For the year ended June 30, **Orange County Community Foundation (OCCF)** donors crossed the \$100 million mark in annual grants and scholarships awarded for the first time ever, and we saw year-over-year grants increase nearly 40% alone this past March and April.

Most importantly, the past year saw innovative collaborations flourish in the local philanthropic sector. A recent State of OC Philanthropy report by **Orange County Grantmakers and Charitable Ventures** found that 86% of OC funders now allow granting to a pooled fund for collaborative granting.

As we look to the year ahead, increased giving is projected to continue. The Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy forecasts that total giving will rise 5.1% in 2021 with gifts by individuals up 4.7% and giving by foundations predicted to grow 6.3%.

And we expect collaboration and creative partnerships to continue growing as well. Nearly 80% of OC funders surveyed in the same State of OC Philanthropy report said they're likely to coordinate with other funders by seeking commonalities, inviting all parties to the table and staying in the conversation despite divergent timelines or priorities.

In 2020, the significant partnerships forged between businesses, nonprofits and funders proved that we're stronger together. And they will be instrumental to the nonprofit sector's longer-term recovery efforts in 2021.

To get a front-line view, I asked these colleagues about their learnings from 2020 and their hopes for the road ahead.

- **Harald Herrmann**, CEO, **Second Harvest Food Bank**
- **Lucy Santana**, CEO, **Girls Inc. of Orange County**
- **Nicole Suydam**, president and CEO, **Goodwill of Orange County**
- **Don Thompson**, executive director, **Thompson Family Foundation**

What about our community's response to this difficult year has made you most proud?

DON: The responsiveness, generosity and flexibility of funders to respond. I'm proud of how donors reacted quickly to get money out without a lot of strings attached. The speed to market was impressive. I'm also proud of how rapidly nonprofits pivoted to respond to the challenges of the pandemic. They worked quickly and created positive impact at a time it was needed most.

NICOLE: I'm most proud of how we quickly repurposed our trucks, drivers and warehouse space to help Second Harvest

Food Bank and Orange County Food Bank meet the unprecedented demand for food assistance in our county. I was also so proud and heartened to see our entire community step up quickly to provide emergency funding to organizations serving people who were losing jobs at historic levels.

What do you think is the most impactful role that philanthropy could play in the year ahead?

LUCY: Leading the charge to continue serving those with the greatest needs in our community. "Showing up" by continuing to invest in organizations that are serving the most at need as well as being aware of the long-lasting effects of COVID-19 in our community.

HARALD: The most important role of philanthropy moving forward is to remain grounded with the unfortunate realization that more families have been pushed into real financial hardship due to the economic fallout of COVID-19. We still face a long winter ahead.

NICOLE: With high rates of unemployment expected into 2021, organizations will continue to see an increased demand for their services that will require us to be even more flexible and innovative in how we operate. The most impactful gift you can make right now is an unrestricted gift to your favorite charity to meet their greatest needs. This kind of gift is like gold to nonprofit leaders when you trust us with your giving this way.

What's your greatest hope for the possibility of our community coming through this challenging year stronger than ever?

DON: We must continue to be flexible as to who and how we fund. You might have a plan, but you need to be flexible and be able to pivot.

LUCY: I hope there will be a continued sense of collaboration through this shared experience and that we are able to focus on what is most important, and together, work toward equity, inclusion, and diversity.

HARALD: My hope is that we can grow through what has been a turbulent year on many fronts and that we move forward together as a "whole" community.

OCCF's forecast for philanthropy in the year ahead: growing impact from thriving partnerships between nonprofits, foundations, individuals, and businesses committed to creating an Orange County that helps all our residents to thrive.

To get involved with the Orange County Community Foundation, visit www.oc-cf.org. ■

Editor's Note: Shelley Hoss serves as president and CEO of the Orange County Community Foundation, which reported revenue of \$120.9 million for the 12 months ended June 30, 2020, an increase of 17% over the previous year. For more information on philanthropy, see the Business Journal's annual ranking of Orange County's non-profit organizations in this week's edition.



By Shelley Hoss

ORANGE COUNTY BUSINESS JOURNAL

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