



PHOTOS FROM LEFT: GILLIAN MATHURIN; DOUG MURRAY; RICHARD DEACON; SUPERWALK MEDIA; YELLOW BRICK HOUSE

Philanthropy in action

The need for charitable contributions is up and rising. But with 90 per cent of donations expected to come from just 10 per cent of donors, charities that aim to succeed must increasingly prove themselves to be mission-focused, accountable and true to their donors.

Purse strings might be tightened, but despite the economy Canadians continue to demonstrate their giving nature. With demand for services rising, however, charities are having to work in more inventive ways than ever to keep donations flowing.

At the Salvation Army, territorial public relations director Andrew Burditt says, "Our fundraising has suffered, but not as much as we thought it might."

"We've seen more people volunteer their time, which is always a very positive thing, whether it is helping at a food bank or standing by one of our (donation) kettles as we come up to Christmas."

The Salvation Army is recognized throughout the world for its leadership as an organization as well as a service provider, and some of the tenets of its success, says Mr. Burditt, are simple ones: Know and respect your donors. Communicate with them; tell

them why you need their assistance and what you plan to do with it.

New technologies are emerging as an effective means of communication. "We use the web to our advantage, to keep our fundraising costs low. Without sacrificing who you are, what you believe, don't be afraid to try new things," he encourages other charitable organizations, noting that the Salvation Army will have a donation kettle (the iKettle) online for the third year.

Derek Fraser, president of the Calgary & Area chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) and capital campaign director at The Mustard Seed Street Ministry in Calgary, says his organization's work illustrates the dichotomy of the current economy.

"We're building an affordable housing tower, the first of its kind in Canada." Noting that the project has been generously supported by Calgarians and Calgary organizations, he

says, "The unfortunate thing is that we've got more demand for this type of facility."

In Calgary and other major cities, the flagging economy led to increased demand for social services, while at the same time straining resources to help people in need.

Across the spectrum, he says, charitable institutions are "hurting in one way or another," due to a decline in the value of endowment funds or decreases in donations.

Many charities are responding to these challenges by incorporating more flexibility into their programming, he says. "A three-year strategic plan is a wonderful governance and operational tool, but a lot of organizations have gone to strategic plans of 12 to 18 months, because there's so much volatility."

Partnerships between organizations have also been an important new trend, he says. "Instead of taking on an event, which is highly expen-

sive in terms of resources, a number of organizations have come together to share the cost and reward. A number of other organizations have had to cancel long-standing events this year: It's a disappointment, but it's sometimes prudent management."

Philanthropy in Canada is supported by many large donations from individuals and organizations, but it is also a grassroots function, he says. "Last year, a fellow who was once a guest of The Mustard Seed came in to donate \$10. He didn't want any recognition or even a receipt. He said, 'The Mustard Seed helped me get a pair of work boots so I could go to work. I wanted to give back.'"

Karen Willson, president of the Greater Toronto chapter of AFP, has been instrumental in major campaigns for the University of Waterloo, Bloorview McMillian Hospital, St. Michael's Hospital and York University in her

role as senior vice president, KCI-Ketchum Canada Inc. Looking at the trends affecting philanthropy today, she says, "Relationships will be key, as individual donors become more discerning and 90 per cent of donations can be expected to come from 10 per cent of donors."

Particularly in this environment, where donors expect more from organizations including tighter cost controls, technology will grow in importance. Unfortunately, she says, "Decision-makers at many organizations are not in touch with the technologies that will drive the next iteration of philanthropy online, social media such as Facebook, Twitter and blogs that facilitate creativity and collaboration."

Despite this changing operating environment, charities and the people they serve have much to be grateful for.

While many charities have seen donations decline

overall, Ms. Willson says it is important to remember that many large donations occurred in 2009, and lists gifts totalling \$68 million dollars in Ontario alone this year.

"Charities that are mission-focused, understand that relationships are key, are open and accountable will continue to attract the generosity of Canadians," she says, noting that a sense of urgency and gratitude is also essential. "It's important to remember that the number one reason people give is that they're asked."

The Minister of Canadian Heritage has officially declared November 15, 2009, as National Philanthropy Day in Canada.

National Philanthropy Day (NPD) is celebrated around the world as a day to recognize the work of charities and remember the extraordinary achievements that philanthropy – giving, volunteering and social engagement – has made in all aspects of life.

Trans Canada Trail

Initiative blazes path for national good

The Trans Canada Trail began with a dream almost as big as the country itself. Yet step by step, this vision to create a pan-Canadian footpath is becoming a reality.

"This is a bold national project, designed to create a legacy for current and future generations," says Mr. Appas. "It is a gift from Canadians to Canadians, inspired by the idea of two men, Dr. Pierre Camu of Quebec and Bill Pratt, one of the fathers of the Calgary Olympics, in 1992."

Chairperson Valerie Pringle says she loves the idea because, "It links the whole country, speaks to our heritage as discoverers and trailblazers – and it's about health, fitness and getting outdoors. You can help build your own local trail

and imagine walking it from the Pacific to the Atlantic."

Since 1992, more than 100,000 Canadians have contributed to the trail through volunteer efforts and donations. It is now about 70 per cent complete, and when it's finished, at 22,000 kilometres, it will – fittingly – be the longest network of trails in the world.

"I always say that great countries have great trails," says Ms. Appas. "America has the iconic Appalachian Trail. Spain has the Camino de Santiago, England the Pennine Way."

Part of the Trans Canada Trail's uniquely Canadian flavour is its 400 sections, built by community partner organizations, she says. "It captures so many facets of Canada's diversity; it's linked to historic places and unique outdoor environments. Experiencing



Now about 70 per cent complete, the Trans Canada Trail project aims to link Canada via the world's longest interconnected trail network. PHOTO: LA TRAVERSÉE DE CHARLEVOIX

the trail, seeing this vast country and all it has to offer, really does make you proud to be Canadian," says Ms. Appas.

In addition to promoting health and fitness, the multi-use trail helps preserve green space and encourages Canadians and visitors to learn more about the

country's rich history and natural heritage, says Ms. Appas, noting, "It is also an economic driver, promoting tourism, creating jobs and encouraging economic growth in large and small communities."

Ms. Pringle regards the initiative among Canada's great

endeavours. "We have built 15,500 kilometres of trail so far, 400 separate trails all across the country, with wonderful names like the Judique Flyer Trail on Cape Breton, the (300-km) Iron Horse Trail in Alberta and the Galloping Goose Trail on Vancouver Island," she says.

Despite the trail's magnitude it's possible to sponsor just a metre of trail with a \$50 donation. Many people donate in memory of loved ones, says Ms. Pringle. The names of donors are engraved in pavilions across the country. "I've seen people run their fingers over the names of family members the way people do at the Vietnam Memorial in Washington. It's very touching to see."

The grand dream of trail builders coast to coast is to finish the trail by 2017, a date

that would mark both the 150th anniversary of Confederation and 25 years since the trail was conceived. Noting the vital contributions of the trail's many supporters, including corporations, foundations, all levels of government and partner organizations, Ms. Appas says, "Achieving this goal will require the personal involvement of Canadians from all walks of life."

As Bill Pratt put it many years ago, "When enough people believe in the vision, it will happen."

On October 31, the Olympic Torch arrived on the Trans Canada Trail in Nanaimo, the first leg of its Canadian journey to the 2010 Winter Olympics. The torch will pass 25 Trans Canada pavilions as it travels from coast to coast before arriving in Vancouver on February 10, 2010.

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I wish my in-laws were coming over for Christmas.

John R.*

Some people would love to have your problems. Donate this Christmas to make hunger and homelessness a problem of the past for Vancouverites like John R. www.ugm.ca



* Recovery Program Graduate, and now a UGM Outreach Worker

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