

When the haves share with the have-nots

Jo Anne Chester Bander is executive director of the Donors Forum, an association of grant-makers active in South Florida.

ON NOV. 14 our community joins others throughout the United States in observing National Philanthropy Day. We will celebrate by honoring and acknowledging the many individuals and businesses whose gifts of time, money, resources, and leadership have built and sustained many of our local hospitals, museums, universities, and social service agencies.

Private philanthropy's critical role is so fundamental to American society that the philanthropic sector is now being looked to as a substitute for diminished public resources. That is neither realistic nor appropriate.

Philanthropy is the voluntary giving by individuals and businesses to promote the common good and improve the quality of life. While philanthropy can, like government, address public needs, it is fundamentally and profoundly private and independent. The publication "Giving USA 1995" reports that in 1994 charitable giving totaled \$130 billion. That amount pales when compared to a federal budget of over \$1.5 trillion annually, and projected cuts of \$1 trillion through 2002.

Of the \$130 billion of private contributions nationally, nearly half goes to churches and other religious groups. Less than \$12 billion goes to human services, where government cuts will be the heaviest. The organizations that rely on government funds include most of the agencies funded by our United Way, from the Girl Scouts to the Salvation Army, from the Urban League to Centro Campesino.

Funds represented by foundation grants, while less than 8 percent of charitable gifts, can be a powerful force for social good. Dade and Broward counties are home to 73 foundations that *The Foundation Directory 1995* reports as having either \$2 million in assets or making \$200,000 in grants.

Two Dade foundations, each

with a national grantmaking focus — the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and Lucille P. Markey Charitable Trust — together account for 67 percent of the assets and 67 percent of total grants. Both foundations reflect the vision and interests of their creators. The Markey Trust funds biomedical research; the Knight Foundation focuses on community initiatives, journalism, education, arts, and culture.

The importance of foundations lies in the quality of their giving rather than in the total dollars that they distribute. They are the venture capital arm of private philanthropy. They are an alternative to government, a proven vehicle for research and development that has modeled Head Start, launched *Sesame Street*, and developed the emergency medical response system that led to the nationwide 911 system.

Can't replace government

Closer to home, grants from foundations, corporations, and individuals have built the new Homeless Assistance Center and launched the Community Partnership for Homeless, which will help alleviate homelessness. Also, major corporate and private support have given us the Ryder Trauma Center at Jackson Memorial Hospital and the University of Miami's Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Institute. The A.D. Henderson Foundation provided a major matching grant to a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation challenge to open Planned Parenthood's Homestead Teen Center.

Other foundation and corporate grants and gifts, often only a few thousand dollars each, support AIDS outreach prevention education, adult literacy programs, and the efforts of One Nation to facilitate citizenship and voter registration.

As we celebrate National Philanthropy Day, we need to appreciate the pluralism of a culture that encourages and expects the haves to share with the have-nots. And we have every reason to expect that the stewards of philanthropic resources will apply the same standards of effectiveness to their giving as they do to their financial investing.

What we cannot and should not expect is for philanthropy to replace government. Better that it continue to exemplify the independence, spirit, participation, vision, and creativity that give our democracy its vitality.



**JO ANNE
CHESTER
BANDER**