

Doers & Donors

Warren Buffett's and Bill and Melinda Gates's giving ways should be an example to us all

BY DEBORAH PENTA

Over the past month, we've heard all about Warren Buffett's net worth rising to \$63 billion, moving his good friend, Bill Gates, into the number three position at \$58 billion on the worldwide list of billionaires as ranked by Forbes magazine.

Most of us know, however, that it is not necessarily what you have, but what you do with what you have that makes a difference and creates a legacy far greater than any ranking on a net worth listing.

Over the past decade, more high-net-worth individuals have made the shift to one of the greatest phenomenon of our time: social entrepreneurship. Bill and Melinda Gates are among them with the establishment of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in 2000. Initially, the Gates's put over \$35 billion into their foundation to create change by addressing a myriad of global issues, improving education in the United States and helping provide health care in poor countries. Their charitable foundation has given back to the tune of \$16.3 billion in grants to inspire and create positive change in our world.

While the Forbes list may appear to an outside observer to suggest that the two billionaires may be competitive, Buffett is involved with and gave over \$40 billion to the Gates Foundation to assist the power couple with their continued efforts to combat domestic issues and assist worldwide initiatives for people and communities in need. Donations of this magnitude can go a long way towards changing our world; thanks to the entrepreneurial success of both Buffett and Gates, problems are getting solved in areas that may have otherwise been neglected due to lack of resources.

HERE AT HOME, you'll find a wonderful community of givers whose generosity has strengthened various programs and initiatives exponentially in Central Massachusetts over the past decade. All of these change makers are using their talents, precious time and financial resources to improve our world, whether on a global scale or more intimately by touching one life at a time in our cities and towns.

We've seen the likes of celebrities who use their financial resources to give back and inspire a community. Many are grateful for their blessings and recognize that as respected and recognizable leaders, they have an even greater responsibility and an unprecedented opportunity to "pay it forward" by serving as social mentors by inspiring a better future and serving as role

models to encourage a community to give back.

Charitable giveback is one of the most fulfilling things one can do in life to build a future where we can pave a better road for our children and instill solid social values for leaders of tomorrow.

The Female Leadership Interest Council (FLIC) was founded on the principal of "paying it forward" by providing community leaders and those who want to develop their leadership skills with an opportunity to dedicate their time and talents to give back through mentoring, education, the benefit of meeting individuals who have blazed significant trails to make a difference and through the combined experiential learning of others. Our membership is comprised of women (and men) who want a place where they can give back and from the experience of giving back, learn more, grow and become more fulfilled as leaders.

MANY WHO DO not have the financial resources to give have opportunities to make a significant impact by giving of their volunteerism through time and talents to strengthen organizations and initiatives. We need doers as much as we need donors to make significant strides in progressing forward. Whether it's through empowering education, ending the crusade against homelessness, helping children faced with life-threatening illnesses or other endeavors, you can help.

FLIC presents an unprecedented opportunity for a community that believes in our mission to "pay it forward" in many ways...as an organization committed to helping women through life transitions by providing education, grants, experiential opportunities, compelling programs and more; both the generous financial support and the previous volunteer support of our community are what help us—and help many.

We believe that you can inspire improvements and growth within your community by sharing. Whether through the generous donation of financial resources or through the investment of time and talents, you can leave a leadership legacy by creating a better tomorrow. FLIC is one organization that would welcome your involvement and there are many others in our region that would as well.

We'd like to know your thoughts. Please email me at dpenta@femaleleaders.org.

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