

Community Engagement

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Includes Philanthropy

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By **John Cook/Fairfax County Supervisor (R-Braddock)**

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Corporate and individual philanthropy are critical elements of engaged communities. Carnegie, Mellon, Vanderbilt, Rockefeller, and more recently, Gates, are names not only reflecting the achievement of the American dream, they are permanently ensconced in history through universities, entertainment centers, art museums, concert halls, and programs for the less fortunate which bear their names. Many other charities and initiatives that help solve problems such as workforce development, environmental sustainability, education and human services are sustained by businesses small and large, as well as our citizens.

Here in Fairfax, great examples of philanthropy abound. The Peterson Family founded Life with Cancer at Inova Health System to support families of those stricken with cancer. Interstate Relocation Services was recently recognized by the Salvation Army for its help with the "Angel Giving Tree" program. Northrop Grumman recently gave \$1 million to George Mason University for its VISTA (Virginia Initiative for Science Teaching and Achievement) program. ExxonMobil generously supports the Library Foundation, and Sotera Defense Solutions has made key contributions to our parks. These examples are powerful, but our work is far from over.

I know in my district, our summer concert series, Braddock Nights, is two weeks shorter this year due to a drop in corporate sponsorships. The Lorton Arts Center, like many arts venues across the country, is teetering on bankruptcy, in part due to lower than expected philanthropic support. And the list goes on.

Recently, the Fairfax Chamber hosted the first in a series of seminars on Corporate Social Responsibility to help businesses align their giving with key community priorities. As we emerge from the recession and begin the journey to a "new normal," we must work to bring philanthropic giving back to – and above – pre-Recession levels. Government programs should not be seen as a replacement for the obligation individuals and businesses have to support those in need and the opportunity we each have to support community needs. Government cannot do it alone. A strong, caring society needs an appropriate level of governmental support, supplemented with vibrant private philanthropy.

There are resources to help. Look to the Office of Public Private Partnerships in our Government Center, the Community

Foundation for Northern Virginia or the Fairfax Chamber to understand better how you can get involved by understanding key community needs and priorities. Let's take philanthropy to a new level in the County and stop the loss, or potential loss, of key community opportunities.

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