A Lifetime of Gratitude and Good Sense

One of Alvin Fisher’s childhood memories involves his mother meting out her change among a variety of “pushkes.” The little black boxes, affixed to a wall in the Fishers’ home, each supported a specific charity or cause: an orphanage or hospital in Israel, or the Jewish National Fund, for example.

“Jewish people used to have little metal boxes called pushkes. In our basement stairway, we had pushkes,” says Fisher. “Every six months or so, a man with a black beard, a black satchel, a black hat, and a claw hammer would come to our house. He’d take the pushkes off the wall and shake them into the satchel. Depending on my mother’s circumstances, a dime, a nickel, a dollar would fall out.”

Though she was raising four children in the midst of the Great Depression, Alvin Fisher’s mother still dropped a few pennies in a pushke whenever she could to benefit any number of causes important to her. That set an example for Alvin that would last all his life.

Alvin, 96, and his wife Hilda, 89, are BCF donors who say their giving is a way to express gratitude for the success – and a bit of luck – they have had in their careers and in their family life. As they raised their four children, both pursued successful careers, Alvin as a real estate investor and Hilda as an instructor of science at Goucher College, her alma mater.

Just as Alvin’s mother supported many Jewish charities with her pennies spread among her many pushkes, the couple regularly supported a long list of favored charities over the years. They are especially passionate about giving to the arts, public television and human services.

But over time, keeping track of their numerous donations and ensuring that their gifts were being used wisely proved to be a challenge. Though dedicated to giving back, they did not see themselves as experts who knew exactly what their community needed to thrive.

And that’s where the Baltimore Community Foundation came in. Alvin first heard about BCF through his friend Herbert Katzenberg, who served as a BCF trustee from 1979 until 1997. Katzenberg expounded on the many advantages of giving through BCF, including the ease of making grants through a charitable fund there, and BCF’s professional staff, who identified grant opportunities aligned with his own charitable goals.

“Herb started describing BCF,” says Fisher. “As he was describing to me the number of places that continued on page 2
A Lifetime of Gratitude and Good Sense

Celia Neustadt sees the Inner Harbor as a meeting place where people of all ages and creeds interact with each other. It’s a center of commerce and tourism. It’s a major hub for all of Baltimore’s transit lines. On any given weekday afternoon, it’s teeming with energy.

“It’s the one place in Baltimore that every Baltimorean has in common: we’ve all been there. “The Inner Harbor is the only place I can think of where teens are rubbing shoulders with business executives,” Neustadt says. “There is a huge opportunity for those people to interact with one another because the major obstacle of location is removed. “

Of course, that common space is not without conflicts, often involving young people. Most of these conflicts arise from a misunderstanding or a clash of differing perspectives. But over the years, it’s Baltimore’s youth who have been most negatively affected. In 2012, for example, the Baltimore City Police Department arrested 163 teens in the Inner Harbor and downtown.

It’s that tension that the Inner Harbor Project, founded in 2012 by Neustadt, works to resolve through youth-led conflict resolution and training.

The Inner Harbor Project’s work is led by paid youth workers. Support for the project from BCF has come through the Fund for Rebuilding Baltimore in 2015, and from the Baltimore Women’s Giving Circle in 2016.

If you are visiting the Inner Harbor or Federal Hill on a weekday afternoon or on a weekend, you might see Hood2Harbor Peace Ambassadors—teens in brightly colored tee shirts—speaking with other youth about the Inner Harbor Project’s mission. The Peace Ambassadors are a positive influence on youth who enjoy the Inner Harbor’s amenities. They also provide information on the project to passersby and tips for other teens who are in the Inner Harbor area.

Another important component of the Inner Harbor Project is the Harbor Card, a discount card that is given to teenagers who complete a 2-hour service learning project. The card gets them discounts to popular Inner Harbor attractions, and keeps them connected to the Inner Harbor Project.

“It’s just another way to create another positive outlet for youth—they get the card, and they visit attractions in the Inner Harbor and engage with other teenagers,” says Neustadt.

The project also hosts youth-led police training that helps Baltimore City Police Department cadets practice techniques for successfully interacting with the city’s youth population. Through the 3-hour training program, youth and officers share their perspectives about each other. The culminating exercise is a role reversal: youth become "officers" and cadets "teens" to demonstrate the best way to communicate.

“The goal of this training is to help officers gain some empathy for youth,” says Neustadt, “so that when they go out on the street, they see kids as complex people.”

It seems to be working. From July through August of 2016, not one youth was arrested at the Inner Harbor. Members of the project also spend time mediating personal conflicts among youth on social media before they play out in the Inner Harbor. This type of mediation has been successful because teens are leading it. “Because their legitimacy to mediate conflicts is based upon their ability to be in the middle of things,” says Neustadt. “We’re working here to prevent conflicts before they happen. ■

Young People a Positive Influence at Inner Harbor

Hilda says that the professionalism that she sees at BCF was key a factor in convincing her that she and Alvin could trust BCF to help them organize their giving. BCF allows Alvin and Hilda to fund small community-based initiatives which BCF has the staff to investigate and oversee as well as the more established charities which they give to year after year.

When we just gave as individuals, we didn’t have the time to look into what was really needed, or understand where the best place to put our money was,” Hilda says. “It made sense to have professionals assist and take care of it. We were impressed by the low overhead and administrative costs [BCF] had. “It made sense for us to have one place where we give most of our money. And let them—the professionals—handle the judgement and deciding where the money should go.”

How do the Fishers feel about giving? Grateful is the word that keeps coming up. They are grateful that they have had the opportunity to raise a family, have successful careers, see the world (the Fishers are avid travelers who have visited dozens of countries), but they are most grateful to have both the means and to have caught the bug to give back to their community.

“We’ve been very lucky,” Hilda says, “and we had the sense to realize that.” ■

THE BCF BEAT Reporting on all things BCF

BCF’s Middle Grades Partnership launches in the Allendale region on site. After 11 years, MVP has changed the lives of 3,500 students! www.middlegradespartnership.org

All the applications were in on time for the second round of Youth Ambassadors grants, a partnership with the Anne E. Casey Foundation and the Baltimore Public Schools. The goal is to expand their knowledge and their ability to transform their communities.

"Future City" debated on MYP, hosted by BCF trustee Wes Moore and moderated by BCF trustee Josh Fuld and supported by BCF. To see the third Wednesday of each month at 1 or 9 p.m.

We invited our Judy Center donors for “Breakfast with Billie,” a chance to meet Program Officer Billie Malcolm who funds our community investments in education.

BCF’s Transportation Alliance released its analysis of MTA’s “BaltimoreLink” plan. Read a summary or delve into the details at www.cmtalliance.org

WHAT’S WORKING

money was touching, the number of institutions, I realized most of it was going into Baltimore itself. We decided after that to subscribe to the foundation. He painted a very descriptive picture. We decided after that to subscribe to the foundation. He painted a very descriptive picture. We decided after that to subscribe to the foundation. He painted a very descriptive picture.

AUGUST 12

JUNE 27
Campaign for BCF and Baltimore Tops $100 Million Goal

Three years ago, BCF set the bar high. We set out to raise $100 million to help Baltimore and support BCF in perpetuity.

We called it the Campaign for BCF and Baltimore, and the $100 million goal seemed aspirational at the time. But after three years of hard work from a dedicated committee of volunteers working alongside our staff, we watched as our campaign ticked past that $100 million mark.

At a celebration held June 9, BCF President and CEO Tom Wilcox revealed the final number: $103.7 million.

“We set a bold goal to raise $100 million during this campaign,” said Laura Gamble, co-chair of the Campaign and chair of BCF’s board of trustees. “This was a huge undertaking for us, but we knew it would pay untold dividends both in the immediate impact it would have in Baltimore and in ensuring that BCF would be able to continue its great work for years to come.

Wes Moore served as Campaign co-chair with Gamble, Eddie Brown, George Bunting, and Suzanne Cohen served as the honorary co-chairs. Along with a Campaign Executive Committee packed with BCF “true believers,” their leadership and outreach was instrumental to the success of the Campaign.

Campaign donors delivered more than $30 million to support immediate needs in Baltimore and almost $70 million in endowment that will generate charitable resources annually for generations to come, enabling BCF to address evolving community needs.

“What we set out to do was to raise one hundred million dollars for Baltimore,” said Wes Moore. “It really says something that Baltimore has trusted BCF with that gift.”

Major gifts ranged from $10,000 to $16 million. Thirty donors made gifts of $1 million or more. The Campaign’s 250 major donors represent a diverse cross section of individual Baltimoreans, business owners, private foundations, and many others who care deeply about the future of our city.

“BCF is grateful to all of the donors who made this campaign a success,” says Wilcox. “From the donor who made a gift of $200 to our Civic Leadership Fund, up to the thirty donors who made gifts of $1,000,000 or more, the response to the Campaign demonstrates the abiding love people have for this community. Gifts to the Campaign are already making a difference in Baltimore. Some are being put to work immediately to make our neighborhoods safe, clean, green and vibrant and to strengthen public education in Baltimore. Other gifts are building permanent endowments to strengthen BCF and ensure its ability to respond to Baltimore’s evolving needs today and in the future.

“All of this generosity is driven by BCF’s vision that Baltimore boasts a growing economy where all have the opportunity to thrive,” said Wilcox. “Because of the Campaign’s success, we can now dare, not just to dream but to assert that this community foundation can achieve what Baltimore deserves.”

WELCOME TO BCF

We are pleased to welcome these new funds of BCF, created between April 1 and September 30, 2016:

- Lillian and Don Bauder Endowed Fund for Music Education
- Bruce and Polly Behrens Charitable Fund
- Mary Catherine Bunting Fund for Civic Leadership
- Chandler Fund for Baltimore
- Greenen-Stewart Fund
- Michael D. Hankin Fund for Baltimore
- The Clarence Fund
- A.C. and Penney Hubbard Endowment for Civic Leadership
- Gloria B. and Herbert M. Katzenberg Endowment for Baltimore
- Mairy’s Fund
- Vivian and Robert Manekin Philanthropic Fund
- William G. Robertson Fund
- School Leadership Fund
- Soto Family Endowment for Civic Leadership
- Whiting-Turner Fund for Civic Leadership

BCF will be closed on December 25 for a quick holiday break, then open all week through Friday December 30, the final business day of the year.

Visit www.bcf.org for more upcoming events.
Baltimore's public education issues and needs networked his way to top philanthropic leaders. Propelled by his uncle's 1975 directive to use his estate to form a charitable foundation, Sheldon read avidly and dove into a process of self-education about the world of philanthropy. Seduced by the field of philanthropy, he joined our board just a few years after it was created, in 1972. When Sheldon joined the community foundation's board in 1979, he sealed what was to become a decades-long relationship not only between BCF and himself, but also between BCF and the Goldseker Foundation.

In ways large and small, quiet and not so quiet, Sheldon patiently toiled to strengthen the community foundation and position it as a crucial and permanent civic resource. He devoted a portion of his Chair's message in each year's Goldseker Foundation annual report to a "state of BCF" update. He kept BCF firmly on the agenda of the Goldseker Foundation, insisting that a strong community foundation would be the most important legacy the Goldseker Foundation could give to Baltimore.

In Baltimore, things don't tend to be black and white, so when a school system is in transition, as is the case with City Schools and its new leadership, my philanthropic power is activated. My philanthropic power—understanding this power and purpose is especially critical at a time when the nation is trying to nail what 21st century learning looks like; and definitely essential at the local level when a school system is in transition, as is the case with City Schools and its new leadership. It doesn't matter if the new administration's agenda is packed with major reform efforts or is focused on low-key improvements, philanthropy's resources and voice are critical to public education's success. If I don't see a change in educational policies and practices that lead to increasingly positive outcomes—ones that ultimately yield improved social conditions—then I have to wonder if I activated my philanthropic power.
Connecting People to Water

“Everyone wants to live in a cleaner place, so we start with trash,” says Leanna Wetmore, the aptly named community coordinator for the Waterfront Partnership of Baltimore. “Trash and alleys are not sexy, so we’re being playful in building affinity for the water and letting people know how trash gets from A to Z.”

Wetmore, whose position BCF helped fund in 2015 through its Neighborhood Sustainability initiative, says the first step is helping neighbors know one another—the neighbors beside and also behind, who share the alley. She asks a community which alleys are highest priorities and then helps organize a cleanup to begin the “ Alley Makeover” process. She watches to identify at least one person who is willing to be a leader on the block, then connects the leader with resources, tools, and uses some of BCF’s funding to enable small projects that will make a difference—painting a mini-mural, perhaps, that says “Love your neighbors: Keep it clean.”

Trash cans are now provided by the city, but recycling cans are not, so Wetmore is using some of the BCF grant dollars for that purpose as well. “When you don’t have any disposable income, buying a can is a barrier,” she says. She wants to raise the current recycling rate of 19 percent to 34 percent, the average in comparable cities. “These alleys were once filled with fruit trees, with kids playing games and riding bikes,” Wetmore says. “They became forgotten space, and we’re reclaiming it.”

For inspiration, Wetmore turns to an alley dubbed “A River Runs Through It,” which is painted to resemble a stream. The painting project followed a series of neighborhood gatherings, including “snowbank parties” where beverages were cooled in piles of snow. The neighbors came to view the alley as valuable, and some 80 people turned out to paint the stream. Ultimately, Wetmore aims to engage more Baltimoreans in the fight to “keep it clean.” She treats people who have participated in alley makeovers to a boat ride, “to show them the life that’s in the harbor.” During the excursion, people from different communities talk about what is working on their blocks, test water quality, and troll for fish and crabs.

“One of the ladies had never been on a boat on the water, and she was so nervous,” recalls Wetmore. “By the end of the ride, she didn’t want to get off.” With a newfound affinity for water, the woman vowed to work even harder to keep her alley clean.

Beyond educational services, children need healthy, welcoming spaces for learning. “BCF was an early champion of our bold proposal to use alternative public financing to renovate and modernize decrepit school buildings in Baltimore City,” Verdery says. “We had to convince a lot of very skeptical people that the financing strategy could work, and we were successful in passing a $1 billion plan to bring up to 28 new or fully modernized buildings to the city school system by 2020.”

In developing this “21st Century Schools” plan, the ACLU and other members of the Baltimore Education Coalition collaborated with the city school system, mayor’s office, and city legislators, among others. The first two new school buildings are currently under construction, and a timeline is in place for improving or replacing each school facility in the plan.

Too many children have been denied access to high-quality education. Day after day, legislative session after legislative session, the ACLU has worked to secure high-quality education for all Maryland children. As with many of BCF’s advocacy grantees, we agree on some issues and differ on others. We both agree with and are grateful for the ACLU’s work on public education.
COMINGS AND GOINGS

Transitions

BCF has always been fortunate to attract talented people to its staff, who support and strengthen our endeavors for Baltimore. We are delighted when we can announce promotions within the organization or welcome newcomers, and when we do have to bid farewell, we’re proud to see how being a part of BCF can shape a career.

We welcome Erika Seth Davies to the role of Acting Chief of Staff. Erika comes to us from ABFE: A Philanthropic Partnership for Black Communities. She will assume much of the portfolio that has been carried by BCF’s longtime Executive VP and COO, Amy T. Seto, who will be starting a newly created position at Brown Advisory in January. As BCF President and CEO Tom Wilcox wrote in a letter announcing Amy’s departure, “It would be impossible to overestimate the precision, joy and impact that Amy Tang Seto has brought to BCF over the past twelve years . . . Amy’s work has been about getting the best out of people, be they professionals or volunteers.” We will miss her.

We also bid a fond farewell to Dion Cartwright, who as program officer steered our Neighborhood Grants Program during her 15 years at BCF. Dion may be the most recognized BCF staff person in far-flung reaches of our community! We are very proud that Dion is moving on to work at Funders for Smart Growth and Livable Communities, whose PLACES Fellowship she has chaired for three years.

Fortunately for BCF, Maya Smith, who has been closely involved in BCF’s community investment work as program associate for 13 years is well prepared to step up to the challenge and has been named program officer. Receptionist Kendra Shaw will fill the program assistant post on an interim basis, so there will be no interruption in support for those applying for grants.

Finally, though we will miss her dependable daily smile, we are celebrating a well-deserved retirement for Bernice Reed, who has been managing gift and grant transactions at BCF for 12 years. Bernice has risen to every challenge we brought her, always with grace.

Though some of the faces are changing, our mission, values and dedication to our donors and to Baltimore remain unchanged. You can count on us!

MY LEGACY

Peggy Taliaferro

My siblings and I have taken great joy in carrying on our mother’s lifetime of charitable giving through a fund at BCF. That’s why I established my own donor-advised fund, which my children will use to carry on this family legacy of giving. In addition, I’ve created a charitable gift annuity which enables me to continue to enjoy income from assets that I have donated to BCF. After my death the annuity will supplement my fund. I can’t imagine a better way to keep a family close than shared values expressed through philanthropy.

Ready to think about your legacy? Contact Rosemary Calderalo by phone: 410-322-4171 or by email: rcalderalo@bcf.org, or visit www.baltimorelegacy.org.