

JHF will give two-thirds of grants to Jewish groups

By Barbara Bayer
Staff Writer

The Jewish Heritage Foundation has formalized and strengthened its commitment to funding programs that benefit the Jewish community of greater Kansas City.

When JHF was established in 1995 with the proceeds of the sale of non-profit Menorah Medical Center to a for-profit hospital chain, its mission was to enhance health and human services here. After 12 years, its board of directors decided to revisit what, why and how the foundation does what it does.

"Once we got into it, we realized we had some stated objectives that we weren't necessarily meeting, and we wanted to change that," said JHF Board President Dr. Daniel Scharf. Thus the board created, and has now implemented, a new strategic plan.

Dr. Scharf was not an original board member of JHF, but as a former president of the MMC medical staff, he has been involved with it almost from its inception. So he knows that the board felt strongly 12 years ago that it should give grants to support health and human services with an emphasis on giving to Jewish organizations.

"We said it, but when it came down to actually giving away the grants, we gave away somewhere around 55 percent to Jewish organizations and 45 percent to non-Jewish organizations. Sometimes it was even closer to 50-50," Dr. Scharf said.

"We discussed whether we wanted to give all the money to the Jewish community or give all the grants out based on merit alone," he said.

Ellen Kort, JHF executive director, said the foundation was established with \$29 million from the original sale of the hospital. And despite giving away the mandatory 5 percent of its principal, or corpus, each year, growth from investments and interest have pushed that figure up to \$52 million. Since its inception, Kort said, JHF has given away \$24.5 million. She estimates it will give away \$2.6 million this year.

Funding innovation

Dr. Scharf said board members believed and continue to believe that, because JHF's original funding came from the Jewish hospital that "was one of the centerpieces of Jewish philanthropy in this community," JHF has an obligation to support the Jewish community.

He said the JHF board also concluded that, inasmuch as the Jewish Federation distributes annual campaign funds to keep local Jewish agencies running, it has become necessary for foundations like JHF to provide funds to initiate new programming within the Jewish community. He cited the Heritage Center — a program for senior adults coordinated by the Jewish

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Dr. Daniel Scharf,
JHF board president

Community Center and heavily funded by JHF — as an example.

"Members of the community identified that there was a real need to allow seniors to have a place to come during the day that provided interesting programming," Dr. Scharf said. "But there just wasn't enough dollars within Federation or the Jewish Community Center to support it. The foundation was able to step in and help fund the initial process, and it has been a very successful program that we are very proud of and that the Jewish Community Center has been able to get other people to help fund."

Dr. Scharf said JHF's new strategic plan commits itself to giving at least two-thirds of its grant monies every year to the Jewish community and whatever funds remain to the general community.

"We have the luxury of looking at wish lists. We ask what they would like to do with an extra \$5,000, \$10,000 or sometimes an extra \$200,000," Dr. Scharf said.

The board, Dr. Scharf said, also wants to devote two-thirds of its time to studying the problems of the Jewish community and working with its agencies.

"We want to be not only philanthropists, but be part of the solution in looking at the needs of our community and how to best face those critical challenges," he said.

In the Jewish community, Kort said, anything that has to do with improving the quality of health and well being can qualify for JHF funding. In the general community, Dr. Scharf said, JHF has the ability to give out core grants for doing good work, not necessarily innovative programming. Women's shelters, for example, can't always offer new programming, but need help keeping the doors open and lights on.

Focus on seniors

Within the one-third of annual grants reserved for the general community, Dr. Scharf said, JHF wants to earmark half of that money for programs that will enhance the lives of senior adults.

"We want to change the way Greater Kansas City deals with aging and make the lives of seniors better," he said. "We'd like to lead the charge in our community and lead all the right people to make a difference."

Kort added, "Nobody in Kansas City is doing this in a concentrated man-

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ner."

Dr. Scharf noted that JHF will continue to have the flexibility to deviate from its grant guidelines in emergency situations, as it has done twice in the last two years. Last summer, JHF gave a \$250,000 gift to the Federation's Israel Emergency Fund. Previously, it made a sizeable donation to relief efforts following Hurricane Katrina.

Dr. Scharf said that, unlike some other groups, JHF has a true working board of directors. "We take our responsibilities in the Jewish communi-

ty even more seriously," Dr. Scharf added.

Kort said JHF is always interested in helping the agencies it funds to "think out of the box."

"Our door is open, and we are happy to entertain ideas," she said.

Dr. Scharf is proud of JHF's entrepreneurial spirit.

"Bring us an idea. If it fails, so be it," he said. "Come back and do something else, and we'll consider that, too."



At the annual JHF board meeting, Donald Tranin, (from left) accepted a framed citation from Merilyn Berenbom, Dr. Daniel Scharf and Sally Tranin.

Jewish Heritage Foundation elects new board, honors outgoing leaders

At the March 22 annual meeting of the board of directors of the Jewish Heritage Foundation of Greater Kansas City, the following board members were unanimously elected to serve additional one-year terms: Barbara Atlas, Stanley J. Bushman, Susan L. Goldsmith, Sharon Greenwood, Joseph L. Hiersteiner, Tom Isenberg, Howard T. Jacobson, James M. Klein, Daniel L. Scharf, M.D., Ann B. Stern and Stanford A. Zeldin.

Merilyn Berenbom, Sheryl T. Davidow, Steven A. Gershon, Gina Kaiser, Mike Milens and Jane Sosland were unanimously elected to serve additional two-year terms.

Four new members were unanimously elected to serve two-year terms: Robin Carr, Sue McCord-Belz-

er, Carol Sader and Stanley P. Weiner. The following officers will serve additional one-year terms: Dr. Daniel L. Scharf, president; Sheryl T. Davidow, executive vice president; Howard T. Jacobson, vice president-investments; Merilyn Berenbom, vice president-grants; James M. Klein, secretary; Steven A. Gershon, treasurer; Jeanette Wishna, immediate past president; and Rodney T. Minkin, chair-audit committee. Bernard P. Erdman continues to serve through senior status as a former Foundation president.

Following the business meeting, a reception was held in honor of outgoing board members Bunni Copaken, Dr. Gustave Eisemann, SuEllen Fried, Dr. Jay Robinow, Linda Sims and Donald H. Tranin.