

MAY THE RIVERS OF WEALTH

BE UNDAMMED AND FLOW

FREELY OVER THE EARTH.

MAY THE GIFTS MOVE THROUGH

INCREASED HANDS UNTIL

ALL PEOPLE EXPERIENCE THE

ABUNDANCE OF LIFE.

Marion Rockefeller Weber

It is my sincere hope that this book will inspire others to explore creative new ways of sharing wealth.

The Flow Fund Circle began in 1991. Each participant in the Circle received \$20,000 a year for three years to give away. Each member provides the Circle with guidelines, a report, and attends one meeting a year. None of the participants has been a philanthropist before, and each is chosen because of his or her outstanding creative and visionary work.

It has been wonderful to watch the ripples radiate out in the world from the Flow Fund Circle — new kinds of philanthropists, gifts that go directly to people and projects unimpeded by the usual obstacles of grant-making bureaucracy, and a new consciousness that generosity can be spontaneous and serendipitous.

I would like to acknowledge and thank Sandra

S. Hobson for her unending support and advice,

Joshua Mailman for encouraging me to make this book, and each member of the Flow Fund Circle for inspiring me in ways I could never have imagined.



This process has made me very happy. It's been a series of lessons in discernment and in placement. My job is to discern what the need is and what the impact could be over the long term. I'm most interested in what seed could be planted and how it will grow over time.

This experience also inspired me to think about social responsibility and philanthropy. If more people could join in a spirit of generosity, what a powerful impact we could have. In fact, there's not a culture in the world that doesn't give gifts. Giving gifts is a ritual we use to extend feelings of love, charity, and generosity. That's why I think the Flow Fund Circle is such an innovative and creative vision for philanthropy.

I also found some wonderful synchronicities in this work. My gift to a

South African project that preserves the culture of eastern cape indigenous

peoples linked me to projects in Peru and in New Zealand. It just took planting
that first seed.



Enid Schreibman

As I was growing up, when there was something I wanted to do — go to Mexico and learn Spanish, for example, my parents never said, "Okay, you can go."

Instead, they said, "You earn some of the necessary money, and then we will help you." My parents' encouragement of self-reliance has become a high value to me.

Fund Circle, and I wanted to pass that feeling on. Therefore, with my grant money, I have looked for people who would really benefit from a similar vote of confidence and would put this gift together with what they raise themselves. I also think it's arrogant for funders to assume they know what's best for people, so I try to work with activists, particularly those in the former Soviet Union to realize their priorities concerning environmental and energy issues. It's much more powerful to dream up your own project than if someone dreams it for you. Ultimately, I look for people who believe they "can do" it for themselves. So I choose people with demonstrated leadership qualities and good project plans.



There was great joy in this experience for me. I've been the recipient of much generosity over the years, so to be able to turn around and be a philanthropist myself was extraordinary.

In our culture, we're subject to feelings of scarcity, that there's not enough to go around. In fact, those feelings of insufficiency often have to do with a sense of inner scarcity. In Buddhism, there is clarity that we do need sufficient resources for food, housing, clothing, and education, and if we have more, we can enjoy generosity. With the Flow Fund Circle gift, it was wonderful to have more because then I can send it back out into the world. Generosity is the first of the perfections in Buddhism. It refers not only to material dimensions but also to a sense of giving away of the self.

As someone who's been involved in teaching and caregiving for those with life-threatening illnesses, I'm always very interested in the way compassion breaks down the boundaries between self and other. For me, that was one of the great experiences of this project. I experienced a quality of seamlessness where there was no boundary dividing giver from gift from recipient.



Vijali Hamilton

The Flow Fund Circle is a very brave and creative way to give. I've always lived my life so that if I had anything to give, I would give it. Being part of this project was very inspiring. I work from the premise that world peace comes from individuals. Being part of this circle was one other way to reflect a global consciousness, to work on a large scale, and to give our lives to bring understanding into the world.

As a sculptor and a writer for the last several years, I've been working on a project I call the World Wheel: Theater of the Earth. That project took me to twelve countries. I would ask everyone I met three questions: "What is our essence? What is our problem? What can heal us?" Their responses formed the sculptures and ritual theater as a healing and transformation for each community. Having the ability to get to know people in other countries and to make gifts through the Flow Fund Circle has given me even more opportunity to engage in others' lives. This allows me to go even deeper in my own life and work.

Fran Peavey

Being part of the Flow Fund Circle gave me a lot of empathy for funders — and it taught me a good deal about how money works. Now, when people come to talk to me about projects in social change, I can use the skills I developed to help them access funds. I can make phone calls others might be intimidated to make.

This was also a lot of fun! When I saw things that needed doing, I could help get them done. For example, two young men were becoming leaders in our campaign to clean up the Ganges River in India. They'd never been outside their country. I made arrangements for them to go to an environmental education program in Australia. They came back with new visions and new energy, and now they're helping to teach and support a second generation that's taking on that issue.



Helena Norberg-Hodge

The Flow Fund Circle helped us to bring our work closer to the grassroots.

Most foundations support more mainstream work at the "top." Instead, we believe in trying to reach the grassroots level where we can strengthen what we believe to be positive roots of change based on wisdom and compassion.

We were so excited to help launch whole grassroots movements in Ladakh, or "little Tibet," where 2,000 women are now linking together to protect their culture and agriculture, and in the UK where we started a project that connects people directly to the farmers who grow their food. By removing all the waste involved in large-scale marketing — the preservatives, the packaging, the long-distance transport, the advertising— we helped farmers become part of a real free-market economy which encourages diversified production and enables consumers to get the benefit of wholesome food.

The Flow Fund Circle Around the World: A Sample of Projects Funded

SOUTH AFRICA, Eastern Cape: Eyethu Imbali Project

Grant to support a community-based organization that records the oral histories of the Zulu, Xchosa, and Sewtu tribes. Preserves the songs, dances, and ceremonial rituals of endangered cultures.

RUSSIA, Bryansk: Unlimited Possibilities Award to Ludmilla Zhirina Viola

Grant to produce a booklet on safe energy for the teachers who work in schools where children are exposed to heavy radiation as a result of the Chernobyl accident.

INDIA, Delhi: Shantum Seth

Grant to support creation of the Nagaland Forest Fund. This fund supports weavers and helps protect endangered forest lands. Shantum Seth is now replicating this project with the United Nations in other locations around the world.

INDIA, West Bengal: Baul Folksingers

Grant to support construction of a community center for meditation, teaching, and accommodations for travelers.

AUSTRALIA, Sydney: Water workers

Grant to support workers who work with young people on water testing and stream clean-up.

ENGLAND, Bristol: Local Food Links

Grant to connect people who grow food with those who eat it. Program helped establish centers where more than 40,000 families are now able to buy locally-grown, organic food

THAILAND, Bangkok: Khunying Kanitha Wichiencharoen, Thai Winner of a Sacred Soul Award

Grant to support the work of the Association for the Promotion of the Status of Women, a nonprofit organization that provides emergency homes for women and children, educates and trains women, and serves as an advocate for women's rights in Thailand.

NEW MEXICO, Near Santa Fe: The Santa Clara Pueblo Preservation Project

Grant to support production, printing, and distribution of Traditional Pueblo Agricultural Practices Handbook, first of its kind publication, based on two years of interviews, photographs, and collecting heritage seeds among Rio Grande Native American Pueblo farmers who are part of a farming heritage that stretches back more than 600 years.

BRAZIL, Bahia: Center for Afro-Oriental Studies, Universidade Federal da Bahia

Grant to supply the school's first computer to record, maintain, give access, and work with its vast documentation on indigenous groups of the area.

NORTHERN JAPAN, Rokkasho

Grant to support a cow barn project and tulip-growing in a remote, nuclear village. The tulip cultivation is transforming the village into a place of great beauty.

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA, Sarajevo: Leadership Grant to Independent Artist/Producer

Grant to support escape from Sarajevo and modest living expenses for political satirist working in television.



I've spent a lifetime involved on the receiving end of the grant-giving process, so being part of the Flow Fund Circle was a remarkable opportunity to look through the other side of the lens. From my perspective, this was the most innovative, cost-effective way of disbursing funds I've ever experienced. This process completely eliminates the bureaucracy which is the usual impediment to grant-giving. There's no cost involved in the administration, and so 100 percent of the money gets to the people who are using it.

There's an American Indian tradition of "the gift that moves." I've talked about the concept philosophically with people, but being part of this process really gave me the experience of participating in a gift that moved.

What I see as the brilliance of this idea is that an American funder can reach people in the most remote areas of the world, through a gift that literally passes from "warm hand to warm hand, warm heart to warm heart." There's an intimate, personal relationship at each step of the process that links us.



Beth Ames Swartz

The Jewish tradition of doing *mitzvah* (good deeds) shaped my character.

Participating in the Flow Fund Circle did not change the way I saw the world; the Fund's support allowed me to dream bigger dreams, to make dreams reality.

As an artist, I am fascinated with the interaction of art and healing. The Flow Fund Circle serves as a real world example of this interaction; energy latent in money may be released through art creating healing within individuals and among groups of people.

The Sacred Souls Project found enlightened people who spent their entire lives being compassionate to others. These Sacred Souls were recognized and revered in their own countries for their good deeds. Winners of the Sacred Souls Award included people who could be classified as educators, environmental activists or social activists; their common ground being accomplishments that really are miraculous. The Project celebrated the work of these saint-like souls.

For me, the key is that one person can make a difference, can change the world. My belief is a continuing theme in my visual art. Every life has purpose.

Every life has meaning. Every pebble makes many waves in the water.

Vijaya Nagarajan



Lee Swensen

Lee Swensen

When you're part of the Flow Fund Circle, you're really investing in people. You are giving them your blessing. You are saying, "This is for you, for a conference, for a printing press." The wonderful assumption the Flow Fund Circle makes is that instead of forcing people to spend weeks and months writing grants, you're preserving their "good work time." They're putting all that time that would have been wasted on grant-writing into their gardens, into their communities.

Vijaya Nagarajan

The key principle that guides the Flow Fund Circle process is trust. We are trusted to make good gifts, and we trust those we help to make the work happen. In a sense, when we make these gifts we're taking a risk. And what I found was that being part of this process helps all of us take risks. It helps build confidence and trust that the world may help you when you need help. I was also surprised by the rarity of this process. In families and in friendships, you give things to each other without expectation of reward. But, it's unusual to have that experience outside of intimate relationships. Being part of this was like introducing the characteristics of familial life into the wider world.

Rachel Naomi Remen, MD



What moved me the most was how I saw things with new eyes. Most of us aren't very aware of the places where positive change is happening in our culture — especially out on the growing edge. But, being part of this process meant looking around to find that growing edge. It's as if someone gave you a supply of water, and suddenly you can see the growing plants that need that water for the first time.

Being part of the Flow Fund Circle also changed the way I see myself. I realize now that being a philanthropist means much more than having money to give. After all, each of us has been blessed with natural gifts. We can deal with those gifts as if they were an inheritance. And we can look around and see how to use our assets — whatever they may be — to move the world.



Sukie Miller

For as long as I can remember I have always wanted to give away money.

Fascinated and amazed by the vast array of things that money can do, I fantasized the Foundation I would create, the grants I would give, and the loans I would make. Being a member of the Flow Fund Circle was a dream come true.

One day, I was sitting at a Flow Fund Circle meeting and I looked around. I knew a few people, others were people I would never have met without being part of this process. Not just was everyone doing unique and creative work, but they were unique and creative people as well. We were both funders and fundees, and this was a different kind of philanthropy. Different as we all were, and different as our giving was, nonetheless, everything about the Flow Fund was of a piece. We gave as we were given — with trust, hope, courage, and the desire to learn. This was foot-to-the-floor philanthropy and it was glorious!



What surprised me the most was how much could be done with very small sums. Somehow, when money went to each project, it turned into a very big amount. That was amazing to me, to watch a project grow and develop. It was also very pleasurable to be a catalyst, to be a helper.

I was also pleased to see how we can be right there, right in the moment.

We didn't have to go through a big organization or a big foundation; we can do work that is very crucial and very present. The Flow Fund Circle gave me the chance to see other people doing the same kind of work I was doing in different parts of the world. With Enid and Fran, for example, it felt to me that we were working on separate projects, but we were of the same blood, working together in a kind of sisterhood. Enid and I are actually collaborating on a project, producing a women's energy book. We are hoping to have it translated into French, Japanese, and Chinese. When I can work like that, I don't feel separated from other people.



The picture above shows a sample of water of good quality. The many vortex form in the sample is made visible by the drop picture method developed by Theodor Schwenk, author of the classic on water phenomenology, *Sensitive Chaos*.

The drop picture method is a diagnostic tool designed to show the overall quality of a water sample and to show how all the different components of water are working together. It is a wholistic diagnostic method. The photo was made by Jennifer Green of the Water Research Institute, the only facility working with this method in the U.S. Marion Weber of the Flow Fund Circle has seen in the image the dynamics of a creative approach to philanthropy.

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