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### Giving Funds Teach Kids and Grandkids to Give Back to the Community During The Holidays



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Teaching kids and grandkids life lessons can be a challenging task. But as the holidays approach, families can bridge the generation gap and teach the spirit of giving with a simple, effective gift: a giving fund.

**Giving funds** offer children a tangible project that gets them personally involved and teaches them about the importance of giving back to the community. For kids who are too young to take part in the family business or other wealth-planning exercises, giving

funds can be an effective tool to learn first-hand about money management and the power of philanthropy.

“Many families use giving funds as a way to pass their commitment to giving back from generation to generation,” said Brent Christopher, president and CEO of Communities Foundation of Texas (CFT). “It’s the perfect way for them to teach their children and grandchildren to do good in the community and to begin thinking of themselves as agents of positive change.”

Fred and Jan Hegi are doing exactly that, giving their six grandkids a hands-on lesson in philanthropy by setting up a giving fund. Through the fund, each grandchild will give a small amount every year to a charity of their choice — a responsibility that each of them has agreed to approach thoughtfully.



Along with their parents and grandparents, Kate (age 15), Mary Allison (12), Hunter (11), Anna (9), Lila (7) and Katherine Hegi (7) met with Communities Foundation of Texas earlier this year to discuss the privilege of giving to others in need. Together, they talked about their own values and charitable interests, and how their giving fund can help them connect their values and resources to local needs.

Each child expressed a deep desire to engage charitably in our community and signed a document pledging to honor the opportunity they have been given to give back. In return, each child received a copy of *The Giving Book* by **Ellen Sabin** and a journal to help them as they consider their charitable contributions.

When asked why it is important to help people, seven-year-old Lila Hegi answered, “because they might be lonely and feel invisible, and if you care about them, it will make them happy.”

But there’s more to philanthropy than donating dollars. The Hegi family also stresses the importance of volunteering.

“Many times giving time is as valuable as giving money,” said Amy Hegi. “Our ultimate goal is to teach our children to think outside of themselves, recognize the need that surrounds us and pay it forward.”

“We’re encouraging them to be thoughtful about how to make a meaningful difference in the world,” said Peter Hegi.

Including children and grandchildren in philanthropy plays an essential role in helping younger generations understand the concept of family values and the importance of charitable giving. Research shows that teaching children about philanthropy can help them better understand that wealth isn’t an identity, but a tool to improve society, either in their own city or halfway across the globe.

Research also shows that younger family members approach philanthropy in slightly different ways than their grandparents did. With easy access to information technology, they’re more globally connected and they communicate differently than previous generations.

Peter Hegi learned this when his 12-year-old daughter Mary Allison told her parents about a school geography lesson in which she and her classmates re-enacted how children in other parts of the world have to walk miles to find safe, clean water. Mary Allison promptly got on the Internet, found an organization that helped people get access to water, and pitched her family a proposal to donate money to one of them.

“When I was her age, I would have never thought of taking that kind of initiative,” Peter Hegi said. “My daughter is living proof that every generation brings important new ways of thinking to the timeless concept of philanthropy.”

To set up a giving fund for your children or grandchildren, contact Elizabeth Liser at Communities Foundation of Texas, [eliser@cftexas.org](mailto:eliser@cftexas.org) 214-750-4234.