

# Newport Beach

L I F E S T Y L E

## CREATING A LEGACY



September 27, 2015

NATIONAL PHILANTHROPY DAY FOUNDER DOUG FREEMAN'S DREAM OF SAYING A COLLECTIVE THANK YOU TO THE PHILANTHROPIC COMMUNITY IS CELEBRATING ITS 30TH ANNIVERSARY.

Article Donna Bunce | Photography Provided



30th Annual  
National  
Philanthropy Day  
Orange County

Thursday,  
November 19,  
2015, 11:30 a.m.–  
1:30 p.m.

It took Doug Freeman 40 trips to Washington, D.C. in five years and 4,000 letters to get the job done, and in 1986, President Ronald Reagan proclaimed November 15th as National Philanthropy Day. This November, according to the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP), 130 communities across the U.S., Mexico and Canada will honor those who represent the spirit of giving in their regions.

<p>Hotel Irvine</p> <p>Call 949.426.2939 for tickets and information or visit <a href="http://NPDOC.org">NPDOC.org</a>.</p> <p>2015 National Philanthropy Day Honorees</p> <p>Legacy Award: Sandy Segerstrom Daniels</p>	<p>This man's journey to set aside a special day to recognize the great contributions philanthropy makes to society began long ago.</p> <p>"My family didn't have wealth," Freeman says. "My parents struggled to provide for their four children. But I vividly remember the commitment they made to us and the lessons they taught us about caring and compassion."</p>
<p>Outstanding Philanthropist: Donnie Crevier</p> <p>Outstanding Philanthropic Group: FedEx Cares</p>	<p>Born in Los Angeles, Freeman says he remembers as early as 15 years of age thinking that that he led something of a charmed life, with wonderful parents and siblings and a great schooling, and he felt a responsibility to do something important. He volunteered as a camp counselor for the YMCA in high school, and that is where, he says, he was taught generosity. But, it was during his freshman year at Stanford that he really got rolling.</p>
<p>Outstanding Volunteer Fundraiser: James F. Amato</p> <p>Outstanding Founder: Rusty Kennedy</p>	<p>"I remember sitting in the freshman convocation surrounded by the most incredible people, and then there was me," he says. "I'm thinking, 'There's no way I should be here.'"</p> <p>Freeman says he left the meeting and walked to the front of the campus, where there is a beautiful grove of eucalyptus trees, and he sat down.</p>
<p>Outstanding Small Business or Corporation: HKA, Inc. Marketing Communications</p>	<p>"I'm thinking that I have to do something so they don't think they made a mistake and send me back to some community college," he says. "So I decided I was going to start a big brothers program. This was long before Big Brothers/Big Sisters and other organizations like it were around."</p>
<p>Outstanding Mid-Size Business or Corporation: KIA Motors America</p>	<p>Freeman knew that East Palo Alto was filled with economically deprived families and that there was an underfunded YMCA nearby, but he had to start somewhere, so he found kids there with either no parents or parents that needed help with their teenage children.</p>
<p>Outstanding Large Business or Corporation: Word</p>	



& Brown  
Companies

Outstanding Youth:  
Anika Ortiz/Anika's  
Pink Closet for  
Mariposa

"I started the big brothers program at Stanford and soon we had dozens and dozens of kids in the program," he says. "I had a little brother for the four years I was there. We didn't call it a nonprofit. It was just a bunch of guys and gals who wanted to work in the community. I realized then that I could have an impact on the lives of troubled children, and I just never stopped."

Freeman ended up marrying Lynn Freschl, his high school sweetheart, whom he met when he was 15 and Lynn was 14. After law school at UCLA, he went on to build a respected law firm (Freeman Freeman and Smiley) and practice tax and estate planning in Los Angeles and later, Orange County. His commitment to philanthropy has been nothing short of amazing over the years and continues unabated to this day. Today, he serves as the executive vice president at First Foundation Bank, where he oversees and directs its philanthropic initiatives, is active in charities throughout Orange County, and serves on the boards of two public charities and four private foundations.

But, back in 1981, Freeman was in Minneapolis at the Walker Art Museum, where he was asked to speak on philanthropy. He knew the museum was one of the great museums in the country, and the audience was made up of the major supporters and donors to the institution. As he looked out over the audience, he remembers thinking that Minneapolis-St. Paul community was one of the most generous in the country, so he said, "Thank you. I just wanted to say thank you to all of you, in part, because of what you do for the Walker and for this community, but, largely, because of what you do for the rest of us around the country. You set the bar very high. It's very inspiring, and you've challenged us to do better. And, so, today, I say, 'Thank you.'"

He then proceeded with his talk. Later, on the flight home, Freeman thought to himself,

"We don't say thank you enough—as a community, as a nation, as an organization."

Freeman used the four-hour flight to write a letter to Ed Meese, the recently appointed Chief of Staff for newly-elected President Ronald Reagan.

"I suggested that we should have a date to honor and celebrate American philanthropy, a unique part of our culture," Freeman recalls. "I didn't know

Ed Meese, but I knew a guy who knew a guy, and I thought I could get the letter delivered that way.”

It was February, 1981, and Freeman says he heard absolutely nothing.

“I wasn’t surprised, but I was disappointed,” he says.

Three months later, Freeman was part of a group conducting a two-day event in Orange County at the Newporter Inn (now known as the Hyatt Regency Newport Beach) to discuss philanthropy in Orange County, California and the nation. The audience was filled with donors, fundraisers and executives from major nonprofits. He had invited Lyn Nofziger, President Reagan’s chief political adviser, as the keynote speaker. Freeman recounts a conversation they had:

“Later, when I took him to the airport, he said to me, ‘Doug, I’m very impressed with the day and with the people of Orange County. I like what you guys are doing. Is there anything I can do to help?’ I had the letter to Ed Meese in my pocket and whipped it out so fast he couldn’t finish his sentence!”

Two weeks later, Freeman received a phone call to ask if he could be in Washington, D.C. for a meeting at the White House, where he was introduced to the recently appointed head of the White House Office of Private Sector Initiatives, former Congressman Jim Coyne.

“On behalf of Ed Meese, he said to me that the concept was great and they’d love to help, but there was nothing they could do other than to wish me well. My task, if I chose to proceed, was to get a bill passed through Congress. Coyne said he would do what he could to bring the President to

that event.”

Freeman knew to do it he needed to build support in the nonprofit community, so he approached what was then known as the National Society of Fundraising Executives (NSFRE), run by President Dick Wilson.

“Together with Dick and another 35 high-powered organizations, we formed an organizing committee,” Freeman says. “The Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) and the National Association for Hospital Development (NAHD) both joined with me.”

That step began the five-year journey for Freeman. Not only was he responsible for obtaining congressional approval for what was to be called National Philanthropy Day, but he had to raise the money to fund those efforts.



"It cost \$250,000 a year to pull it off. I had to ask for money so that I could have a day to say thank you," he says, smiling. "However, I met some amazing people, who understood what we were trying to do, and they funded it."

Early on, Freeman "knew a guy who knew a guy" and cold-called Marvin Hamlisch and asked him to compose an official song for the day, which turned out to be "Now More Than Ever," and Johnny Mann of the famed Johnny Mann Singers agreed to record it— both men doing it gratis.

Three years after NPD was officially announced, realizing the effort needed a permanent home, Freeman asked Wilson if NSFRE would accept that responsibility, and it did.

Congressional approval was finally obtained, and the official announcement by President Reagan was scheduled for November 14, 1986. The proclamation named the following day, November 15, the official National Philanthropy Day, with the understanding that communities around the country could celebrate whatever day they chose.

"At the White House ceremony, I had the privilege of introducing the President," Freeman says. "The President began his talk with the formal announcement of National Philanthropy Day and he spoke about the history and importance of philanthropy in America. I was struck by the fact that there were 30 to 40 members of the press in attendance who weren't paying much attention or taking notes. There were no photos being taken. They were pretty much just watching until the President transitioned his talk to say, 'and now, I would like to talk to you about ...,' and all of a

sudden, the pens came out and cameras started rolling."

The President then began to discuss his intention to launch an investigation into the Iran-Contra affair.

With amusement, Freeman reflects, "I believe the only thing anyone really remembered of that day was Doug Freeman was at the side of President Reagan when the President announced the Iran-Contra investigation. More than five years of working on behalf of philanthropy melted into the Potomac. I received more calls and letters from friends and acquaintances who wanted to know if I was a CIA agent than from those congratulating me for passing a bill through Congress!"

As it turned out, Orange County was one of the first communities in the country to celebrate National Philanthropy Day, now celebrated in three countries. And, true to its commitment, AFP has hosted each one. Freeman is especially grateful to AFP for that support.

Freeman has attended many NPDs in different cities over the years, and he is always inspired.

Following a National Philanthropy Day, Freeman relates, "I think one of the best stories is from a gentleman from Orange County, who I knew to be extremely generous with his time and resources. He said to me, 'I never knew how little I had done until I stood in front of people who had done so much more.'"

After 30 years of saying 'thank you,' Freeman has this to say:

"It's extremely heartwarming to commemorate the personal commitments of women, men, children and organizations, who truly sacrifice their time and treasure for the benefit of others. So, yes, I think National Philanthropy Day has done what it was intended to do. And, I will never forget I got here because other people paved the way."