



STYLE

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Section C



Jennifer King (left), Laura Arrillaga (right), and on the stairs (bottom to top), Chuck Slaughter, Daniel Lurie, Noosheen Hashemi and Trevor Traina at Thrive House for children.

CLASS ACTS

A new breed of young Bay Area philanthropists redefines the meaning — and methods — of giving

By *Carolyn Zinko*
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

On any given weekday, Thrive House, a wood-shingled Edwardian at Broderick and Eddy streets, is a place for disadvantaged children, who are tutored, counseled and taught a variety of life skills there after school.

But on a recent Thursday, one 12-year-old nag the place to herself — in part because several other children were truant.

"Michelle" (not her real name, which is being withheld to protect her privacy) is struggling in her classes. She skips out or falls asleep at her desk. "Sometimes I talk on the phone from 9 p.m. to 2 a.m.," she boasted.

But with the house to herself, the fifth-grader, who has four siblings, basked in the attention of her men-

tor, Thuy Nguyen, and led visitors on a tour, marveling at the closet space before repairing to the kitchen, where she learned to make a pot of macaroni and cheese.

it is catching up — with Silicon Valley money — to the long-established charitable scene on the East Coast, where the Carnegie and Rockefeller foundations have long been staples of civic life.

While older tech fortunes have created the largest foundations here — including the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation — younger people are finding it's possible to become philanthropists, too.

Nowadays, it seems that everyone younger than 45 has his or her own nonprofit or foundation — or at least pet cause — judging from the never-ending stream of invitations to luncheons, cocktail parties and other functions that promise to spare the rain forest, prevent animal abuse or otherwise help save the world.

From 1999 to 2004, the number of foundations in California grew from 4,208 to 6,242, an increase of nearly 50 percent, surpassing the national growth of 35 percent, according to a recent study by the Foundation Center in New York, which tracks philanthropic giving. Santa Clara County — high tech's ground zero — had the largest growth in the state, 148 percent, with 292 foundations formed.

Though the center does not track donors' ages, a growing number in the Bay Area's younger set are leading their peers into philanthropic efforts, spurred in part by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's unprecedented efforts to tackle global health issues and financier Warren Buffett's historic \$1.5 billion contribution to the Gates Foundation this year.

Some are creating new types of foundations by borrowing business models used in the venture capital world. Others are creating projects more appealing to their friends than conventional institutional programs. And those without millions are putting what they do have — time and effort — into innovative nonprofits, hoping that their successes will make it hip to do good.

"This is really the first time in history where a lifetime of wealth creation can happen to an individual in

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"The era of people writing a check to the American Cancer Society is over among newer, wealthy people. They're hands-on, asking, 'Where's the greatest return on my investment and how will I know it?'"

PETER HERO, former president, Community Foundation Silicon Valley

"I like coming here because we have fun," she said. Jennifer King, an Internet entrepreneur and investor who founded the nonprofit in July, couldn't be happier about the impact Thrive House has had on children's lives.

"Watching a kid make a meal in the house is what it's all about," she said. "The kids have a sense of accomplishment, sitting down to eat with their mentor and with other kids in the house, creating a sense of community."

As California's philanthropic landscape matures,

PROFILE | Noosheen Hashemi



Thinking big was part of the culture at Oracle Corp., where Hashemi was an executive, with chief executive Larry Ellison as a model.

After engineering a financial turnaround for the company in 1991, she left in 1995 and a year later went to work at Quote.com. She left a year later to start a family with her husband, Farzad Nazem, chief technology officer at Yahoo, and they founded the HAND Foundation, with two goals: fighting childhood sexual abuse and building the middle class in developing nations.

Hashemi also created a nonprofit online magazine called Forsat.org that helps budding entrepreneurs in the Farsi-speaking world, some 90 million people in Afghanistan, Central Asia and elsewhere. Farsi has no word for entrepreneur, but *forsat* means opportunity. She is also on the board of the New America Foundation, a public policy institute, and MIT's Iranian studies program.

Hashemi's newest project is the PARSIA Community Foundation, which supports Persian arts, culture and civic engagement in the Persian diaspora. "Five of seven board members at PARSIA are under 45. We are now beyond the financial part of the American dream — we're pursuing the other part of the American dream, which is doing something worthwhile with your money," Hashemi said. "The Lamborghini is not the whole American dream. The whole American dream is the one Warren Buffett and Bill Gates are living."

— Carolyn Zinko



Jason Murphy (foreground) is a consultant for the Mind Body Awareness Project, which teaches meditation and yoga to young offenders at the juvenile hall in Santa Cruz.

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was up to people his age to turn peers into patrons.

Traina, who lived for a time in New York and belonged to museum party committees, copied the Frick Museum's Young Fellows ball — a staple of Park Avenue society — in hopes that a glitzy local event with big-ticket prices would be a smash. (Similarly, SFMOMA created an event in recent years, the two-tier-ticket Modern Ball, to bring young donors into the fold.)

It took months for Traina and three socially prominent co-chairs to secure sponsors for food, beverage, gifts and decor, develop a guest list and send out invitations to their friends in their 30s. They even borrowed tablecloths from his mother and put pressure on Sotheby's, where his parents have spent vast amounts of money, to become a sponsor.

"We wanted to go from nothing to an incredible party from day one, and if the party wasn't great, we'd have missed the chance to rope them in — no one's going to go a second year to a party that was bad the first year," Traina said. "In five or 10 years, we'll have missed the window. They'll be attached to other causes."

The first ball of the Junior Committee netted \$80,000, Traina said, noting that this spring, the third annual ball netted roughly \$200,000, and it has become the largest single-night fundraiser at the museum.

"There is occasionally a bias against cultural institutions because they're perceived as not having as much of an impact in peo-

"It doesn't make good sense to solve all problems with military solutions — at the end of the day, stability is an economics issue. Whether it's Oakland, Egypt or Afghanistan, if millions of 18-year-olds don't have jobs, they're going to be up to all sorts of mischief."

NOOSHEEN HASHEMI

ple's lives, but (they are) very deserving of our support and add tremendously to the vibrancy of our community," said Traina, who collects Remington bronzes, paintings of the Hudson River school and photography.

"The new de Young had over 1.3 million visitors in its first year, twice the population of San Francisco. It also has the largest classroom space of any museum in America, 40,000 square feet. In a day when public schools are cutting back on art, we educate."

"The Academy of Sciences is being rebuilt; SFMOMA is a great museum," he added. "We have the oldest ballet company in the nation, a great opera and a great

symphony. It's the difference between being a small town and an international destination."

Even so, the most popular causes in foundation giving in California are health care and education, according to the Foundation Center's report "California Foundations: An Update on the State's Grantmaking Community," released in November.

The analysis sampled 1,172 of the nation's largest foundations in 2004 to determine patterns in giving and compared the results with patterns from 1999 and previous years. The sample included 119 California foundations, representing 46 percent of donations by all foundations in the state.

Roughly 24 percent of giving in 2004 went to health, while nearly 19 percent went to education. On a national scale, California foundations gave larger shares of grant dollars to health, environment and wildlife, science and technology, and religion than their counterparts across the country. They gave smaller shares to arts and culture, human services, civil rights and community development, and social sciences than other U.S. foundations.

Funding for overseas programs — primarily dealing with the environment, international affairs, development and peace and security — increased by 73 percent during the same time period, largely because of contributions by the Hewlett and Moore foundations, according to the report.

Chuck Slaughter, 43, of Sausalito, founder of TravelSmith Outfitters, is creating a nonprofit to help impoverished African villages. His venture, *Living Goods*, will sell mosquito nets, contraceptives and water treatment tablets in their neighborhoods, in much the way Avon ladies peddle beauty products to their friends.

Although for decades media reports have detailed the way foreign charity is diverted from the needy to corrupt governments, Slaughter saw for himself that it doesn't have to be so.

In 1988, after college and a failed attempt to become a documentary filmmaker, Slaughter came across a story in the *New York Times* about Trickle Up, an organization that provided seed money to people in developing hundreds of "solidarity circles" — women who wanted to start small businesses. It was long before the term "micro-enterprise" was a buzzword and Muhammad Yunus won a Nobel Prize for issuing microcredit in Bangladesh.

"It seemed like a lot more direct way to make a difference," he recalled. So he went to work for the group, visiting Asia along the way and seeing entrepreneurs at work in a range of activities from running tea stands to sewing dresses.

Three years later, he created TravelSmith. He sold his interest in

PROFILE | Chuck Slaughter



Chuck Slaughter, 43, created TravelSmith Outfitters in his living room in Menlo Park in 1991. In 2004, he sold his interest to a large publishing company. Within a year, he was traveling again.

A friend told him about the HealthStore Foundation in Minneapolis and its Kenya-based Child and Family Wellness Shops — business franchises operated by villagers who sell essential drugs to rural populations. He joined the group's board for two years. That experience was the inspiration for Living Goods, a Ugandan program that trains village women to go door-to-door, selling products that improve health and quality of life.

Startup costs will run about \$200 per person, for inventory, backpacks, uniforms, storage cabinets and perhaps a bicycle for transportation; each salesperson is targeted to earn up to \$500 a year — a respectable income in a country where per capita annual income averages \$280. "Twenty years from now, my hope is that Living Goods is as big as Avon," Slaughter said. "If the lady going door-to-door can't make a profit, she won't spend time on it; there will be no health benefit."

Stateside causes are important, he said, but "my own resources are limited. Every hour and dollar I invest there will go farther overseas than here."

—C.Z.

guide a financial turnaround for the company after it was hit with class-action shareholder lawsuits in 1990 and forced to restate earnings in 1991.

Today, she's a "retired" mother of two, married to Farzad Nazem, the chief technology officer at Yahoo. She's also created three non-profit groups and sits on the board of a fourth, devoting 70 hours a week to her causes.

Hashemi's interests revolve around using economic development to fight global instability, and preventing child abuse. "It doesn't make good sense to solve all problems with military solutions — at the end of the day, stability is an economics issue," she said. "Whether it's Oakland, Egypt or Afghanistan, if millions of 18-year-olds don't have jobs, they're going to be up to all sorts of mischief."

Her newest cause is promoting civic participation by Iranian Americans and supporting Persian arts and culture in the United States with the PARSIA Community Foundation, which she founded nine months ago.

The foundation, the only one of its kind in the world, she said, already has a \$7 million endowment and six donor-advised funds, the result of Hashemi's dogged cold calls and visits to financially successful Iranians in the Bay Area, Los Angeles, Florida, New York and London.

"Can you imagine calling people to ask them for \$1 million?" said Hashemi, an exacting and precise person who throws tea parties for friends with the same attention to detail she used in poring over Oracle's books. "I had never asked anybody for anything in my life. I'd worked to get a salary. I paid for dinner when I took my billionaire friends to dinner."

PARSIA made its first grant in September, giving \$210,000 to Ashoka, an international program in Virginia. Ashoka gives seed money to entrepreneurs in disadvantaged countries to start programs that address social problems, such as dispute resolution centers in Nigeria, self-help movements for disabled street beggars in Ghana and drug rehabilitation centers in Peru. Ashoka will select an entrepreneur of Persian descent and award the money to him or her for use in a social engineering project.

PARSIA's mission is, in some ways, a delicate sell. Other nonprofits can pump money directly into programs in Asia, South America and Africa. Some PARSIA donors would like to support programs for youth, the disabled and the environment in Iran. But legal sanctions prohibit American citizens from conducting financial transactions there.

"We can't send money to build hospitals or universities," Hashemi said.

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the company in 2004 and since then has been an active investor in a variety of catalog companies and worked with a nonprofit called Healthshare, which helped Kenya set up medical dispensaries in their villages.

That in turn inspired him to start Living Goods in Uganda. He is developing a partnership with BRAC, an anti-poverty organization in Bangladesh, to recruit women from the poorest villages and give them \$100 to \$200 loans to start selling health care products in their neighborhoods. BRAC already is funding female-run businesses in Uganda through hundreds of "solidarity circles" — groups of 20 to 30 women who receive loans to start small businesses. He has made several trips to Uganda in recent months to find prospective saleswomen to start in May. He hopes to have a workforce of 3,000 within five years.

At a recent meeting with 20 women in a slum outside Kampala, Slaughter, a married father of two, was asked whether Living Goods would offer child sponsorships — to help feed and educate children — by one of the women, who was caring for a child whose parents had both died of AIDS.

He asked how many others were doing the same, and 90 percent of the women raised their hands.

"It stopped me dead," Slaughter said. "I was a bit in horror that that many families had been affected. There's a big difference that can be made if you do nothing else than improve distribution and uptake of condoms."

Hashemi was sent by her parents at age 14 to live with her brother in San Jose in 1977, two years before the Iranian revolution unseated the Shah. She earned an economics degree from San Jose State University and went to work at Oracle in 1985, helping

SWELLS
and Benefits will return

CLASS ACTS

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mi said. "So for PARSA, we're essentially trying to promote philanthropy in our local communities, to give to the adopted country that gave us opportunities, that we love, and then we want to make sure that our donors give to the Persian community, and maybe some day we can form chapters in other countries."

King, the Internet entrepreneur, put her business acumen to work in philanthropy as well — but locally.

The San Francisco resident founded a company in 1985 that

became Biospace.com, a leading biotech Web portal, in 1995. In 2001 she founded Rugged Elegance, an online business that promotes "soulful living." She uses personal investments to help fund her family's Thrive Foundation, which was founded 10 years ago by King and her husband, Tim Fredel, her brother and sister and their spouses, and her parents, all of whom contribute financially. It focuses on youth development.

King, now 46, started Thrive House this summer in the house where she, her husband and two children had lived for years. Thanks to a stock windfall — King

"I believe the basic nature of people is good, even if their life circumstances may not be."

ISAIAH SERET

said she and her family were the initial investors in Baidu, Google's Chinese rival — they were able to move to a nicer neighborhood, but were torn about selling the home.

King's personal trainer, Antony Thier, came up with a novel idea: Why not keep the house, continue to pay the mortgage and turn it into a study hall for kids from nearby housing projects? A San Francisco Housing Authority official loved the idea and helped King set up a monthlong pilot program in July.

So Thrive House, run by the local chapter of the nonprofit Friends of the Children, was born. "We had lived in this area that is technically called Anza Vista — many people refer to it as the Western Addition — for 15 years, and it is amazing to me that after all this time, this neck of the woods is not getting safer," King said. "When Antony proposed this concept of creating a home for underserved kids in the city, the house seemed to be a natural space to run life-skills programs for kids."

King's interest in helping children stems from her personal life. Both of her children have Type 1 diabetes. Her relatives — a sister who is a pastor, her sister's husband, also a pastor, her brother, a filmmaker, and his wife, also a pastor — manage the Thrive Foundation along with King's parents, and all decided that children and adolescents would be the focus of their philanthropy.

King has made donations to Hope Unlimited, which takes child prostitutes and drug addicts off the streets of Brazil. The Thrive Foundation has given \$1 million each to Fuller Seminary, Stanford's Center for Adolescent Development and the Search Institute in Minneapolis.

But Thrive House is at the center of King's universe right now, maybe — the ever-smiling, energetic entrepreneur suggested — because the universe wants it that way.

"In the 1960s, this house was a home for emotionally disturbed girls," she said. "It's like the house has a soul and it's saying, 'I want to

come back to being used in this way.'"

Those who can't donate millions in tech fortunes are donating spirit.

Isaiah Seret, a 29-year-old independent filmmaker in San Francisco who travels to India for movie projects and meditation retreats, co-founded the Mind Body Awareness Project in 2000. The nonprofit sends teachers to juvenile halls to teach adolescents to meditate, so they can learn how to control their impulses and see that they have choices about how to react — or not react — to their thoughts.

"I believe the basic nature of people is good, even if their life circumstances may not be," Seret said. "If these kids just have opportunities to know themselves, it can help their goodness come right out."

Seret attended the California Institute of Integral Studies and co-founded the program with two classmates and two other friends. Some of them had experimented with drugs in their younger days and turned to meditation as a way to cope. One of them, Noah Levine, wrote the book "Dharma Punx," a memoir of his turn-around from skate punk-thief-drug addict to Buddhist meditation teacher.

Levine began teaching at a nonprofit that taught meditation at juvenile halls in Santa Cruz and San Mateo counties, and asked Seret, then 21, to join him. The kids went from tough-talking diggeters and fighters to relaxed individuals in an hour's time.

"They're so hopeless in a lot of ways," said Seret, haltingly, as if it physically pained him to express the sentiment. "They have nothing. Teaching them meditation is giving them something. The heart of self-respect is to be able to make some decisions in your life."

Seeing nothing similar in San Francisco or Alameda counties, Seret and Levine created Mind Body Awareness to fill the gap. In 2005, MBA merged with the group serving Santa Cruz and San Mateo counties.

MBA teaches 50 classes in four counties on a \$150,000 annual operating budget. Seret's own troubled past — running with a hip-hop crowd and struggling with alcohol and marijuana while in film school in Los Angeles — gave him credibility with the young offenders.

"All the founders felt that we could be these kids who we were teaching in juvenile hall," Seret said. "We felt we were in a unique position to work with them, whereas many of the staff at juvenile hall didn't really see anything good in them. It's a buck-the-system, do-it-yourself attitude we have. We can't sit around and expect other people to save us, or to actually help young people."

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PROFILE | Isaiah Seret



Courtesy: Isaiah Seret

When he was in high school in Santa Fe, students were required to volunteer; in college, Isaiah Seret learned that volunteering could be a calling.

After volunteering to teach meditation at a Santa Cruz juvenile hall, Seret, two college classmates and two other

After volunteering to teach meditation at a Santa Cruz juvenile hall, Seret, two college classmates and two other friends founded the Mind Body Awareness Project to teach the practice in Bay Area juvenile halls.

Professor Emeritus Jon Kabat-Zinn of the University of Massachusetts Medical School, who created the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program used in prisons, corporations and schools across the nation and world, is on MBA's advisory board.

MBA expanded so quickly that it had to curtail some classes to stay afloat. But financial capital isn't all it needs. Without human capital, the program would not have worked, either.

"There are young people who ... don't necessarily have a fortune to back their projects, just raw determination to make a change," Seret said. "That's the subset I belong to."

His activities have had an unexpected side benefit. His father, Ira, who spent 15 years in Afghanistan buying rugs, furniture and textiles and sells them at Seret & Sons gallery in Santa Fe, was so inspired by his son's efforts that he started his own nonprofit. The Jindag Foundation is working to restore war-torn Istalif, a village outside Kabul famous as an artists' colony, and to feed and provide first aid to monks in Tibet.

— C.Z.

PROFILE | Jennifer King



ERIC LOVE / THE CHRONICLE 2005

Among the projects that San Francisco Internet entrepreneur Jennifer King and her family's Thrive Foundation fund is research on adolescent development at academic institutions — the first step toward creating programs that can be put into effect across the nation.

"We're not just going to give the nonprofit a check, we're going to build synergies, too," she said. "That's why we focus our funding half on research and half on applications."

Thrive Foundation works with Stanford University's Center for Adolescent Development, where graduate students develop online tools, including a "Thrive-o-gram" that parents, teachers and mentors can use to better understand kids.

King, 46, and her family have also funded research at Fuller Seminary's Center for Research in Child and Adolescent Development. The result: the Fuller Youth Initiative, a three-year, multimillion-dollar program funded by the U.S. Department of Justice that tries to prevent youth violence in Pasadena.

Her philanthropic approach comes from the heart, but her approach is all business. "As a result of the relationships we have on the research side and investments we're making there, we can accomplish so much more in a shorter period of time."

— C.Z.

Foundation contacts

- **Living Goods:** Chuck Slaughter, (415) 332-1153; www.livinggoods.org
- **Mind Body Awareness Project:** Gabriel Kram, (415) 824-2048; www.mbaiprject.org
- **PARSA Community Foundation:** Anouk Lim, (650) 599-9057; www.parsact.org
- **Silicon Valley Social Ventures:** Nancy Clarke Cole, (408) 278-2218; www.sv2.org
- **Thrive House:** Antony Thier, (415) 272-8386; el.ruggedelegance.com/thrivehouse
- **Tipping Point Community:** Daniel Lurie, (415) 348-1240; www.tippingpoint.org
- **Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco:** Jessica Turner, museum development department, (415) 750-3518; www.thinker.org

— C.Z.