

GIVING

Forever giving

BY DR. JULIA EAST

President and CEO,
Southwest Florida Community Foundation

Forever is a concept most of us have difficulty grasping, especially as it relates to our own actions. Is it possible that a decision we make today will have an impact on generations yet to be born? How can we understand the meaning of permanent, lasting and enduring?

This "forever" concept is exactly why community foundations exist. We create an enduring source of funding to meet the needs of our community through endowed funds. An endowment fund is permanent — the initial investment that creates the fund, along with the gifts that are added over the years, will always be at the community foundation to generate income to meet future needs.

One of the most powerful, local examples of this concept is the Leonard Santini Fund, a field-of-interest fund (a fund established to meet the needs in a certain area such as arts and culture, education or child welfare), created in 1978 at the Southwest Florida Community Foundation. This was the first major gift received by the foundation upon its establishment in 1976.

Leonard Santini, a potato farmer and fisherman from Iona, was a giving man. He dreamed of using his hard-earned treasure for the benefit of people with mental health problems, underprivileged children, and Christian education.

With his attorney's guidance, Mr. Santini willed his Fort Myers Beach shopping center to the Foundation, creating what is still our largest endowed fund. When his gift matured, the Foundation sold Santini Plaza for \$2.5 million.

A quote from Mr. Santini in a letter written before his death:

"I am eternally grateful to God

for the wisdom and good fortune which He has given to me and it is through His grace that I have been financially fortunate. It is with this gratitude that I wish to return to Him and for His Glory a portion of what He has given to me through this Foundation in seeking to help His children. It is in Lee County that God has blessed me, so it is in Lee County that I feel compelled to return these blessings to Him."

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Thirty years later, this first major endowed fund of the Community Foundation, originally worth \$2.5 million, is still worth more than \$2.9 million even though it has provided more than \$4 million in

grants to area nonprofit organizations since 1978.

In 2007, the Santini Fund provided more than \$160,000 in grants for agencies such as IMPACT for Development Education, Harry Chapin Food Bank, Community Cooperative Ministries, Inc., Salvation Army, Bishop Verot High School, VOICES for Kids of Southwest Florida, Inc., Tender Loving Care, and so many more.

Whether you establish your own endowed fund with your community foundation or add to one of the many already in place, you can be assured that your gift will keep providing for Southwest Florida's unmet needs for many years to come. ■

The Southwest Florida Community Foundation has been supporting the communities of Lee, Charlotte, Collier, Glades and Hendry through endowed funds for more than 30 years. With assets of more than \$57 million and 314 endowed funds, the community foundation has provided more than \$30 million in grants and scholarships to the communities it serves.

For more information, please call 274-5900, or visit their web site at www.floridacommunity.com.



PUZZLE ANSWERS

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