On the Campaign Trail: The Faces of Philanthropy

Campaign UCLA made a difference in the lives of everyone it touched, whether donor or recipient. Here are some of their stories.

By Kristine Breeese ’88 • Photos by Michael Sugrue

AT ITS VERY ESSENCE, philanthropy is about people working together. Yes, money matters, and fund-raising serves an essential economic need. But giving makes a difference that cannot be measured only in dollars and cents. And it enriches those who give, as well as those who receive.

Donors large and small gave to Campaign UCLA, in gratitude for what they received from the university and to accomplish something meaningful. The beneficiaries of those gifts, meanwhile, were able to pursue their dreams, improve the lives of others — and sometimes became donors themselves.

“Philanthropy connects people with something larger than themselves, and that changes everything,” says Michael C. Eicher, UCLA vice chancellor for external affairs, who overseeing the drive from its inception.

More than 225,000 people collectively gave more than $3 billion during the 10-year campaign that concluded Dec. 31, the most successful university fund-raising effort in the history of higher education. Alumni, students, faculty, staff, friends — people from all over the country and the world — were connected by reciprocal benefit and an enduring bond with the university.

“People can talk about what [my wife and I] gave to the campaign, but at the end of the day, I believe we got more than we gave,” says Campaign chairman Bob Wilson ’53. “UCLA gave me an unbelievable education. It’s where I met my wife and what formed our partnership. Our five sons were all born at the UCLA Medical Center. I could go on and on. I owe so much to UCLA.”

Roy Aaron, who co-chaired the Campaign, echoes those comments. “There has been nothing more rewarding in my life than what we’ve been able to do through this campaign,” he says. “Sure, I gave, but I think about how I benefit. On a personal level, I will benefit from the friendships I made and the shared pride in what we accomplished. But I also benefit, like people everywhere, from the excellence that defines UCLA, whether it’s in arts, architecture, research, medicine, you name it.”

Casey Wasserman ’96, grandson of Edie Wasserman and her late husband, Lew, knows well the story of how his grandfather pushed early on for UCLA to dream big. Indeed, it was Lew’s insistence that got Wilson, Aaron and others to embrace (and then far exceed) the original goal of $1.2 billion. “And if he was here now, I think he’d say, ‘I was right,’” Casey says. “I also think he’d say keep on going.”

“Andrew Katz ’69, J.D. ’72

As a Chancellor’s Associate, Andy Katz holds a leadership position within the UCLA Fund, where, over the last 10 years, he has given more than $140,000 in unrestricted gifts, including donations to a unit across campus. Katz is equally proud of another aspect of his giving. “I literally bleed for my school,” he says, referring to the seven gallons of blood he has donated to UCLA since he began doing so as a student. “As a (sought-after) Type-O donor, my blood may even mean more to the university than my money.”

Katz, an attorney in West Los Angeles, earned his bachelor’s degree from UCLA in engineering and his J.D. from UCLA School of Law. His four siblings, two daughters and son-in-law are also Bruins. “My career has been built on the great education I received at UCLA,” he says. “This is a gift I never take for granted.”

In addition, if it hadn’t been for a dorm dance at Dykstra Hall, he might never have met Denise, his wife of 36 years. He says they have many “priceless memories,” from Dykstra to Pauley Pavilion. “We got married the summer before law school and the only way we could afford was basketball games at Pauley, which cost only 25 cents,” he recalls.

On What It Means to Give: “I remember as a kid thinking outside and beyond yourself to make a difference in any way possible.”


dollar in gifts and pledges

The benefactors and beneficiaries profiled below are each, in their own way, testament to the impact of philanthropy on both UCLA and society, and the enduring nature of good works.
“When I was a kid, my parents started this huge charity event called the Community Christmas Dinner for anyone who could not afford a meal on Christmas or had nowhere to go. My brothers and I served up mashed potatoes, turkey and all the trimmings year after year. I learned that it’s not what you give, but the spirit of giving, that counts.”

BRAD DELSON ‘99
The guitarist for Grammy Award-winning alternative rock group Linkin Park gave close to $400,000 to establish the Delson Scholarship Fund in the UCLA College of Letters and Science. The fund provides undergraduate scholarships for inner-city kids, especially those who attended Nimitz Middle School near downtown Los Angeles. Delson was one of Campaign UCLA’s youngest major donors. He also gives of his time, speaking to local young people about the importance of education, “even for rock stars.” One of the first schools he visited in that effort was Nimitz, where his friend Rebecca was teaching. “I was impressed by the kids, but also saw that they didn’t have the best prospects because the graduation rates at many of these inner-city schools are just so low,” Delson recalls. “So I just started talking to them and challenging them to think about staying in school and going to college. If you get them young, you can still make a big difference.”

On Learning How to Give: “When I was a kid, my parents started this huge charity event called the Community Christmas Dinner for anyone who could not afford a meal on Christmas or had nowhere to go. My brothers and I served up mashed potatoes, turkey and all the trimmings year after year. I learned that it’s not what you give, but the spirit of giving, that counts.”

JUDY BENSON ’60 AND ROGER BENSON ’58
The Bruin couple donated $1 million to establish and endow the Benson Family Fellowships at the School of Nursing and UCLA Anderson School of Management. The annual fellowships will support one student in nursing and another in business, the areas of the Bensons’ respective backgrounds and interests. “It’s thrilling to realize that you can participate in improving the life outcome for another person,” Judy says. “And education is probably the best way to do this.”

“UCLA opened the world to me,” Roger says. “Through the fraternity/sorority system, I made lifelong friends. Through the campus activities and celebrations, I learned teamwork and leadership. After graduation, we lived in Westwood so Judy could finish her education, and I took several UCLA Extension courses that really pushed the envelope of my mind.”

On How Philanthropy Differs from Charity: Both Bensons say they didn’t consider themselves “philanthropists” until recently, even though they’ve always been charitably inclined. Roger says that philanthropy is different than charity because “it means the opportunity and obligation to give back responsibly, making sure measurable results are achieved.”

On How UCLA Became “Home”: “UCLA opened the world to me,” Roger says. “Through the fraternity/sorority system, I made lifelong friends. Through the campus activities and celebrations, I learned teamwork and leadership. After graduation, we lived in Westwood so Judy could finish her education, and I took several UCLA Extension courses that really pushed the envelope of my mind.”

ROGER BENSON ’58
“For as long as I can remember, there have been benefactors in my life, looking out for me and helping me reach my goals. As a low-income, minority student, these gifts have made a huge difference.”

RAVI MENGHANI ’03
The second-year med student, multiple-scholarship winner and Alumni Scholar received close to $5,000 in grants as an undergraduate, but he says it was never about the money. “Any amount helps when you’ve got books, tuition and rent to pay, but even if I’d only won $50, it was the feeling of belonging that meant the most to me.”

Although Menghani is in medical school, with all the student loans and studying that implies, he has helped launch a mentorship program within the Alumni Relations office and currently mentors four undergraduates who are interested in medicine. He also gave $250 to Campaign UCLA last year. “And I certainly plan on giving more, when my salary rises above ‘negative $40,000’ to ‘positive $40,000’ and higher,” he laughs.

On Donors as Guardian Angels: “For as long as I can remember, there have been benefactors in my life, looking out for me and helping me reach my goals. As a low-income, minority student, these gifts have made a huge difference.”

DAVA HEATHERTON ’06
“During my senior year, I worked as an intern in corporate communications at a large company and had the opportunity to travel to Japan to gain experience. I was so excited to be able to travel to a new country and learn about a different culture. I also had the opportunity to meet with influential leaders in the industry and gain valuable insights into the work they do.”

On Donors as Guardian Angels: “For as long as I can remember, there have been benefactors in my life, looking out for me and helping me reach my goals. As a low-income, minority student, these gifts have made a huge difference.”
AUTUMN LOVE ’06

Love, a third-year senior, will graduate in June with a degree in English. Her education was made possible through numerous scholarships totaling more than $25,000, in addition to internships, travel and networking opportunities as a representative of UCLA. “But more than all of that,” Love says, “UCLA gave me confidence and the belief that I can do anything.”

Love gave $7 to the campaign through her Senior Class Gift. “I did it on my credit card over the phone, it was really easy,” she says. “I know it’s not much, but I also know that it’s better to give a little than not give at all, and one day I will be able to give back more.” In addition to excelling in school, Love gave back to the university and the community at large by becoming an avid volunteer. “One of the benefits of having my scholarships was that I did not have to work while in school,” she says. So rather than spending her extra time at the beach, she studied hard and held leadership positions with several community-service groups on campus.

On How Philanthropy Changed Her Life:

“I literally wanted to go to UCLA since I was 9. ... But my mom works at Albertsons, and we didn’t have any extra money. So, not only did I need a plan to get accepted to UCLA, but a plan to pay for it. If it weren’t for the people who donated to UCLA and made my scholarships possible, I would not be where I am today ... and ready to do so much more.”

DEAN GERALD LEVEY

As vice chancellor for medical sciences and dean of the David Geffen School of Medicine, Gerald Levey heads a unit of the university which benefited more than any other from the campaign, when measured in dollars alone. In all, $1.7 billion was raised for the medical sciences, including support designated for patient care, medical education, research and faculty support, which, he points out, “are the kinds of gifts that will keep on giving for a long time.”

An important reason for the success of Campaign UCLA is that each and every campus unit took ownership of its goals and targets. At the medical school, Levey was the person responsible for that, and it is the experience itself he singles out when asked what he personally received from the Campaign. “Before I came to UCLA, I had no experience with fund-raising,” he says. “But in the just-concluded drive, everybody made a contribution, and we had physicians and scientists developing relationships. It was a total team effort.”

On How it Feels to Have Succeeded:

“Our success was complete, and it is both satisfying and humbling to have played a part in that success. The people who showed their faith in UCLA must know we are grateful. They have secured our future.”

HOW TO GIVE

Philanthropy can help make miracles, but for it to be truly meaningful, the donor has to be involved emotionally and practical-ly, not just financially. Whether a gift is $5 or $5 million, as Ted Turner says, “You have to learn to give.” And if anyone knows giving, it’s Wallis Annenberg. The daughter of Walter Annenberg, the late publisher-philanthropist and ambassador to Britain, Wallis was raised with a strong philanthropic tradition. For those who seek to help at any level, she offers advice based upon unmatched experience as the head of the $2.7-billion Annenberg Foundation, which was a major donor to Campaign UCLA.

“Our family takes a very hands-on approach to philanthropy,” she says. “Direct participation is really the only way that you can get a full sense of what the community needs and how you can help.” She suggests that philanthropists “sit across the table” from the people who are asking for help. “Dialogue is critical in getting across the point that you’re not just a bag of cash ripe for the picking,” she says. “Good philanthropists want to learn, listen and serve.”

Wallis says to give effectively, let your gifts reflect your deepest convictions. “If you’re into instant gratification, philanthropy is probably not for you. But if you stick with it and do it right, giving enriches you and the world around you like nothing else.”

— Kristine Breese