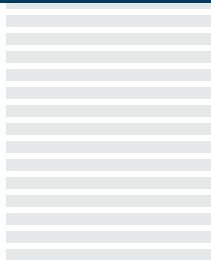




BY **TERESA K. TRAVERSE** / PHOTOS BY **CLAUDIA JOHNSTONE**

PHILANTHROPY POWERHOUSES



Philanthropy is about giving back and serving others who are in need. In our men's issue, we wanted to spotlight men who are working in philanthropy both locally and internationally to help others. Meet these five men who are making a difference.

Skyler Badenoch

CEO at Hope for Haiti

Scottsdale native Skyler Badenoch got started in philanthropy when he joined the Peace Corps after graduating from the University of Arizona. He was volunteering in a rural remote village on West Africa's Ivory Coast. That experience proved to be the foundation of his professional career.

"It taught me a lot about culture and learning languages and really coming in as a listener first. And that's really developed my leadership style, just to be able to be a listener first and really understand the situation before trying to make any assumptions," says Badenoch. "We have a situation where there's a lot of intelligent people in the world today, they just don't have the same opportunity as we are luckily afforded. Something I became passionate about was how we bridge that opportunity gap."

Post Peace Corps, he decided to pursue a graduate degree in international development studies at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. After earning his master's degree, he spent 10 years with an organization called buildOn. He ran programs and raised funds to help build schools in developing countries like Haiti, Nicaragua, Senegal and Mali. Five years ago, he moved back to Scottsdale and was approached about being the CEO of Hope for Haiti. Hope for Haiti is a nonprofit that strives to alleviate poverty in Haiti and improve health care in addition to access to clean water, education and opportunity.

He travels all over to meet with donors and work in Haiti, a country that is recovering from a devastating earthquake that happened in 2021. Locally, he serves on the board of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Scottsdale.

He says he finds three things about his work inspiring. One is the purpose of Hope for Haiti, which is to provide opportunity. Second, it's the people he works with.

Third, "it's rewarding to be able to say that in places where a lot of people don't think things are possible, we can prove them wrong. We can prove ourselves. We can help improve the quality of life," he says. "We can do things that are incredibly challenging, and I like that. I think that's just something that speaks to me and inspires me."

Visit www.hopeforhaiti.com to learn more.



Jared A. Langkilde

President and CEO of the HonorHealth Foundation

Jared A. Langkilde got his start in philanthropy by volunteering with the United Way. Like many who gravitate towards philanthropy, Langkilde wanted to do something with his life that mattered.

"One of the greatest losses in life is potential, especially human potential. And so I wanted to do something that would help those around me," he says. "Really live a life that was full of meaning, purpose and of consequence. Indeed, a life of significance that I could look back after a 30-year career and say that 'I mattered. And what I did helped people become their best selves.'"

Prior to joining the HonorHealth Foundation, he worked in the Mesa Community College system for 21 years. He led all the philanthropic efforts at the community college.

"We had grown that program to having the most number of alumni giving to their alma mater for any community college in the country," he says.

He was approached by his predecessor at HonorHealth about taking over his current job. He decided to wait two years for retirement benefit purposes. Once that time was up, he was interviewed by the foundation's board and landed the job. In his current role, he fundraises for the foundation's many different programs and motivates the staff around him.

"I'm constantly communicating, motivating, inspiring and helping people to see that number one, this is the most exciting time ever, in all of human history, to be involved in health care," he says, due to scientific advancements. "Philanthropy can make sure that the right things are getting done for the right reasons, and we're very fortunate that every dollar goes towards the donor's intended cause. We don't charge any fees to any of their gifts."

What does he attribute to his success in fundraising? By focusing on others.

"By modeling best practices and empowering people and motivating people to have the best career of their life and to do their best work and to seize the day with the time that we all have together. To do the most good," he says. "When you get out of people's way and let them shine and leverage the expertise and experience that they've come with, their potential is limitless."

Visit www.honorhealthfoundation.org to learn more.



Ronen Aviram

Board Chair of the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Central & Northern Arizona

Ronen Aviram initially got involved with the Ronald McDonald House Charities when he was in Dallas. He was helping cook meals for families staying at the charities while their children, typically, are undergoing medical treatments. Most families stay at these houses for weeks at a time and are provided with complimentary housing and food. When he saw how much those meals affected the residents, he knew he wanted to continue with the charity.

"You see the stress kind of oozing out of them with a really great meal, and so that was my passion," says Aviram.

After working as the general manager of the Swissotel Chicago, he returned to Scottsdale in August of 2016. Aviram is the vice president and general manager of Scottsdale's Hotel Valley Ho, and he was searching for a charitable organization the hotel could focus on.

"The mission and taking care of families, providing them a great place to stay and helping them during a difficult time is important. But there's also a lot of consistency and operations between a hotel environment and what the Ronald McDonald House does," he says. After all, hotels provide lodging, meals and offer a place of respite, just like a Ronald McDonald house does.

"I can always provide assistance from an expertise perspective," he says. "It was a no-brainer to do it ... I really enjoy the camaraderie and the just the passion for the people that are on the board."

He's been on the board for four years and is currently the board chair for 2022. In that role, he helps in any way he can. This includes driving recruitment, fundraising, organizing events and participating in long-term strategic planning, messaging and branding.

Two events he spearheaded were the organization's gala and golf tournament. He said they were more profitable than ever before under his guidance. He also helps find organizations to cook meals at the three Valley houses.

"It's a blessing to be able to be put in a position to help people out. As a parent, there's nothing worse when your child is sick, and you want to help them out," says Aviram. "It's selfishly so rewarding."

Visit www.rmhcna.org for more information.



Howard Epstein

Founder of the Arizona Housing Fund

Howard Epstein has been fighting the issue of homelessness for about 25 years. Many who are looking for low-income housing are often on waiting lists that are at least six-months long.

"The housing issue has a solution: We need more units," says Epstein.

He started the Arizona Housing Fund to provide private funds to help nonprofits and local governments build and provide housing for vulnerable populations. One of the ways the fund collects money is by asking the brokerage community to request that individuals who are buying, selling or refinancing homes donate.

"We're narrowly focused on three things: One, is we're providing equity grants to nonprofits who do this. Two, it's got to be for bringing new inventory, new units, new stock to our cities that need it. Three, it's real emphasis on helping the most vulnerable. Think of people who are living in emergency shelters or transitional shelters or worse, living unsheltered on the streets or in their car," he says.

Epstein first got involved in this issue through Central Arizona Shelter Services (CASS). Epstein is a national executive of real estate asset sales at Bank of America, a company that supports CASS. The then CEO of Bank of America asked Epstein to serve on the board of CASS, and he agreed.

"I didn't know it would lead to a 25-year effort, but it's a fight I'm willing to fight," he says. "If I didn't do this, I don't know if anybody would."

He says that it's inspiring to see how many others are willing to help out.

"It just warms your heart to see that everybody wants to be part of the solution," he says. One woman gave the fund \$75,000. The fund has just crossed the \$1 million mark. In the next 10 to 15 years, Epstein hopes to raise \$100 million.

"If you can't feed yourself or put a roof over your head, I'm not sure what else matters," he says. "These are people who, they find a sense of community and care, and they feel safe. You walk around and you meet the tenants, and you go, 'Gosh, we're saving lives. That's the beauty of it. That's why I'm in it'."

Visit www.arizonahousingfund.org to learn more.



Ben Vega

Philanthropy Officer at Phoenix Children's Hospital Foundation

After the pandemic forced everyone to stay at home in March of 2020, Ben Vega took time to reflect on his career. Vega had been working at a real estate investment firm while volunteering with Scottsdale's 20/30 Club. His wife told him she felt that he was happier fundraising and doing children's charity work. She suggested a career change.

"I spent that summer reinventing myself and looking at what was out there," he says. He found Steve Shaw, the senior vice president and chief development officer at Phoenix Children's Hospital (PCH). He was hired in January of 2021 and has never looked back.

As a philanthropy officer with the Phoenix Children's Hospital Foundation, Vega is responsible for working with individual donors.

"What I'm doing at the end of the day is forming those relationships to tell them about PCH. What we're doing in the community, what the needs of the community are and how the hospital is trying to meet those needs," he says.

North Scottsdale resident Vega is the father to a one-year-old daughter, and says he sees how much these families love their children but how understandably scared they are following a diagnosis or accident.

"The foundation of the hospital, really at their core, is they want to inspire hope for families and for their patients. Children really need a voice. They need someone to advocate for them in all areas of their life," he says. "What PCH does, it's beyond just mending the illness or the incident, it's really bringing parents hope."

One of his proudest achievements is spearheading a mental health campaign.

"It's something that is invisible. It's something that's quiet. It's something that's not seen, and yet it touches almost every life here in the Valley and the nation. How do we really get ahead of this? What do we do?," he says.

What he loves most about his job is working with other people.

"At the very core of what my job is, it's really connecting with people," he says. "I love it because then it's like I'm bringing someone on to our team and we're working together, and it's a partnership."

Visit www.phoenixchildrensfoundation.org for more information.

