

Aspen's unsung heroes

Editor's note: This is the first in a series on the art of philanthropy, and how local giving is changing local lives.

PHILANTHROPY IN ITS purest form is about giving from the heart. The term "philanthropist" is often reserved for those who donate at the five or seven figure level. In reality, philanthropists — those who volunteer their time and give at a financial level that honors their capacity — come from all walks of life.

One of the more endearing qualities of Aspen is how neighbors — our extended family — run (not walk) to support someone in need.

Take for example, Melina Glavas. Melina had noticed that Fulya Alan, one of the line staff in the Little Nell's banquet department, had been missing. Now Melina barely knew Fulya. She wasn't Fulya's boss.

She just noticed the absence of a member of their team. Fulya, like many, worked paycheck-to-paycheck. When Melina discovered that Fulya had stomach cancer, she asked, "Who is helping Fulya?" When the answer was, "No one," Melina and her co-workers moved into action. Montagna and Ajax Tavern restaurant staff, room service and valet parkers donated their holiday tips. A reservationist (who earns \$14 per hour) gave an inspiring \$400.

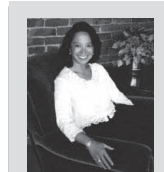
From co-workers, friends, ski instructors, on-mountain employees — people who didn't even know Fulya — including someone in Pennsylvania who had heard someone needed help — Melina raised more than \$14,000 in ten days. For Melina and Fulya, the generosity was overwhelming and saved Fulya's life. "People gave because they cared and realized it could happen to them."

Several years ago, Bob Sloezen was a beneficiary of this Valley's largess. Known to many as "Sloman," Bob is a 35-year local, Highlands Ski Patroller, Mount Everest climber (sometimes without oxygen), and more. It was in Tibet at 19,000 feet above sea level that he suspected something was wrong. Between cancer, surgery, chemotherapy, a broken jaw and kidney infections, Bob's finances were stretched. Once again, Aspen jumped into action.

Bob Perlmutter teamed with Amy Beidleman and Christy Mahon to throw one of the more memorable fundraising events this valley has known for a member of its "family." The event, held at Bumps, featured three live bands, food, drink, and a

silent auction to rival all silent auctions — even a car! Wall-to-wall people from Bob's life packed the room. Thanks to Highlands Ski Patrollers (who watched his back when he tenuously returned to work), friends, acquaintances and strangers, Bob kept his home, paid his bills and healed.

When asked how being the beneficiary of such generosity changed him, Bob responded, "It humbled me tremendously. We all come from somewhere to be here with one another because Aspen is a great place to be. We are each other's family. How do you give back to someone who gave you \$35 or brought you food? I do it by doing lots of little things, including encouraging people in tough situations. My goal is to be genuinely kind. I'd like to say to everyone ... Live your life, live in the moment and



GINNI GALICINAO

SLOW DOWN!

Our final story is about Emily Weingart, an Aspen high school counselor, and her childhood friend, Mandy Norton, an account director for a local marketing firm. Emily and Mandy began

Roaring Fork Valley's 100+ Women Who Care as a way for women, especially the younger generation, to learn about the valley's 509 nonprofits (509!). During their quarterly meetings, attendees hear about three different nonprofits and choose one. Checks are written for \$100 to support this nonprofit, or members team with others to collectively give \$100. To date, they have raised \$16,411 and funded three nonprofits. Their next gathering is Dec. 14 at the Limelight Hotel at 6 p.m. What do people love about this group? It's fun, open to all, an opportunity for women of all ages

to learn from and about each other, and a chance to learn what it means to be a philanthropist.

How big a role does philanthropy play in creating a strong community? Many believe that philanthropy — in all of its forms — connects us, builds "muscle memory" and momentum, and enables us to reach out in many directions simultaneously.

The Roaring Fork Valley is filled with a number of philanthropists whom I think of as "Unsung Heroes." Locals who see a need, step forward, and say, "I can help."

This is the first in a series of articles where we will be exploring Aspen's philanthropists in action. Ginni Galicinao is a philanthropic advisor and legacy coach. She works with families, individuals and businesses to find fun, inspiration and fulfillment by clarifying and focusing their philanthropic efforts. www.philanthropy-legacy.com. ginni@gingali.com.

