

# Five Fascinating Philanthropists

By MICHELLE SLATALLA

*These innovative givers don't just write checks. They donate time -- and get results.*

When Brooke Astor dressed up in a fur coat and jewels to drive around town in a chauffeured limo, making personal visits to every charity that asked her for money, she was considered the epitome of a proactive philanthropist.

The definition has changed. Last year, Americans donated \$291 billion to charity. But the most creative givers, a new generation of 21st-century philanthropists, do far more than write checks to the causes they support. They donate their time and expertise, working as many as 80 hours a week, to try to fix the world.

*Barron's* is profiling five of these innovative philanthropists, looking at the entrepreneurial spirit that propelled them to think of new solutions for social problems. None of our picks are headline-grabbing billionaires using \$100 million grants to wipe out a disease, but each is deploying grants and sweat equity in such an original way that it changes the world.

It starts with caring. Maybe the thing they care about is animals -- so they sponsor a competition to get top architects to design bridges for wild animals to safely cross highways. Or they care about people -- so they create a company to help low-income students get high-paying jobs. Or they care about America's future -- so they build a Museum of Math to persuade schoolchildren to like a critically important subject.

What philanthropists like these have in common is that "they're driven in a truly personal way," says Glen Macdonald, president of the Wealth & Giving Forum. "They're really no different from someone like Steve Jobs -- absolutely, single-mindedly committed to innovation -- except that the thing they're passionate about is helping other people."

It requires focus and real expertise. Today's most creative philanthropists aren't just rolling up their shirt sleeves for the cameras. Mindful that the best intentions can go wrong if you pose like Madonna for a photo op in front of a faraway orphanage, they take the opposite approach. They immerse themselves in the minutiae of their causes. They understand where a system's flaws are. Then they fix it with creative approaches.

In philanthropy, it's notoriously difficult to measure impact. But the most effective givers are obsessed with getting results. And they're nimble. "They create their own measures of success, and they hold their programs to them," says H. King McGlaughon, chief executive of Foundation

Source, which manages the finances of about 1,000 private foundations. "They're self-directed, they're constantly questioning the value of the course they've set, and they aren't afraid to change direction fast."

## ***Glen Whitney***

Math excites Glen Whitney. He believes it should excite you, too. This is why Whitney, a former algorithms specialist at the famously math-loving hedge fund Renaissance Technologies, has raised more than \$22 million to open a New York City museum to glorify a subject that many Americans loathe by middle school. "We're trying to create a safe place to love math," Whitney says.

The Museum of Math, with 9,000 square feet of exhibits, will open its doors in Manhattan late next year. The museum will feature square-wheeled tricycles that offer a smooth ride over a grooved surface of catenary curves, a roulette wheel to teach probability theory and an opening exhibit so cool -- Whitney is sure of this -- that parents won't begrudge paying \$15 per adult and \$9 per kid for admission.



Brad Trent for Barron's

Glen Whitney is planning a math museum for kids at this New York site.

"You'll see a two-story-tall sculpture, made of taut, wiry airplane cables -- it's all straight lines -- and then you can actually walk inside of it and see the shape transform," Whitney says. "And you'll realize you can make an elegant curved shape out of straight lines."

Aimed at fourth- through eighth-graders, the museum's goal is to make kids think math is fun. Which most probably don't: By eighth grade, only 35% are proficient, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

That bugs Whitney. "We already have a shortage of people who are adept enough in math to fill all the positions available that require math skills," he says. "It's a large societal problem: America doesn't like math."

Consider Whitney's own experience. Growing up in New Jersey, he was so good at numbers that by second grade his teachers recommended he skip to the fourth grade. Yet, he says, "I didn't like math, maybe because it was dismissed as a tool to use if you want to understand something else. Who loves a hammer?"

It wasn't until Whitney went to math camp as a teen that he started to see the fun. By the time he was 30, he was a math professor at the University of Michigan when. There, in 1997, he got an e-mail from a former boss he'd worked for at IBM during a long-ago summer internship: "I'm at Renaissance now. How would you like to sell out and join us?"

Whitney spent the next 10 years at the hedge fund, where the legendary quantitative trader Jim Simons had created an extraordinary analytical system. "The particle collider at Brookhaven National Lab might possibly generate more data than Renaissance processes on a daily basis," says Whitney, "but there's not much else that does."

All those algorithms paid off for Renaissance and for Whitney. But after a decade of making money, he wanted to figure out how to spend it to help the world (in a quantifiable, pro-math way, of course).

He started coaching kids in math, first at his daughter's school, on Long Island, and later through a high-school enrichment program he launched at the Brookhaven labs. He showed up there on a recent Saturday morning with a bag full of red plastic triangles and snapped them together to form three-dimensional shapes as he talked about his work: "When you start to play with things, to think deeply about them, you see such a range of surprising and beautiful things -- look, I made a flying saucer polyhedron."

The Museum of Math is the first of its kind in North America. "Certainly there's a need; it's a no-brainer," says Jeremy Kilpatrick, co-chair of the National Academy of Education's committee on math and science education. "We manage to kill off the interest that little kids have in it. Maybe this museum can help change that."

In hindsight, it all seems so obvious. But Whitney saw it first.

### ***Laura Arrillaga-Andreessen***

For some, philanthropy is in their DNA: They're so naturally good at it, they can effortlessly teach others, too.

While "how to" philanthropy courses are now fairly common at the nation's top schools, they weren't when Professor Laura Arrillaga-Andreessen created Stanford University's first class to teach MBAs-in-training how to give away their money.

"There was nothing like it anywhere," says Tarek Ghani, who took the class as an undergraduate in 2004 and credits it with inspiring him to later work for a nonprofit. "It was incredible: This young, enthusiastic, high-powered professor who walks into the room the first day, drops this 500-page binder on the table and says, 'I expect you to know everything that's in this.' She said we can all be philanthropists, that you don't have to be a Carnegie or a Gates, that whatever you give of yourself out of the desire to make the world better is philanthropy."



Martin Kimek for Barron's

Laura Arrillaga-Andreessen created and teaches in Stanford University's first MBA class in philanthropy.

Her class has a ripple effect. In the past decade, more than 500 students have enrolled. Like Ghani, many of Andreessen's former students keep in touch -- with her and one another -- forming an ad hoc network that shares job leads and ideas about grants and charitable programs.

For Arrillaga-Andreessen, becoming a philanthropist was kind of like going into the family business. The daughter of one of northern California's most successful real-estate developers, John Arrillaga, she is on the board of a family foundation he created that holds assets of \$31 million.

She is also married to venture capitalist Marc Andreessen, cofounder of Netscape. To celebrate their 2006 wedding, the newlyweds pledged \$27.5 million to Stanford Hospital's emergency department.

Her greatest influence, she says, was a childhood in Palo Alto spent watching her mother, Frances Arrillaga, treat her volunteer work as a serious, full-time job.

"She took me along once after school, when I was in seventh grade, to a nonprofit where she was on the board," Arrillaga-Andreessen says. "I remember standing in the hallway, while she was in a meeting with the executive director, and I started reading all of the flyers and information on the wall for the people who came in for services. It was the first time I really understood how blessed my family was with resources and how it was our responsibility to share them. I think this was exactly what she wanted me to figure out that day."

Arrillaga-Andreessen graduated with an MBA in 1997 during the dot-com boom, a time when a slew of young, successful tech entrepreneurs were trying to figure out what to do with the next chapters of their lives, and with their money. While her classmates had been writing business plans for making money, she had drafted a template for a philanthropists' giving circle, which became the Silicon Valley Social Venture Fund in 1998.

The fund's donors pool ideas, resources and individual annual contributions of as little as \$5,000 to make grants to 35 small, promising nonprofit groups. One of them, a local tutoring program for low-income middle-school students, enrolls 350 students each year, up from 26 in 1989. Another turns California farmers' cow manure into renewable energy.

These days, besides teaching, Arrillaga-Andreessen is promoting her new book, *Giving 2.0: Transform Your Giving and Our World*, published by Jossey-Bass. Her royalties will go to charity, of course.

## ***Gerald Chertavian***

The dress code is one of many rules everybody enrolled in the Year Up program must abide by: Slacks, skirts, ties, suit jackets and stockings are acceptable. Sneakers and jeans are not.

As a result, the 47 young men and women, ages 18 to 24, who stream every weekday morning into a sunny fourth-floor suite on Wall Street to sign in (another rule) by 8:30 a.m. don't look like people who dropped out of high school, or who spent childhoods in foster care, or who not so long ago believed their future was working the night shift at McDonald's.

In their business-hopeful attire, they head off to their morning classes, where they learn college-level grammar and database management and how to design computer networks. They look talented and eager and smart -- precisely the sort that companies like Google, LinkedIn or JPMorgan might want to hire.



Shawn Henry for Barron's

Gerald Chertavian has helped train thousands of low-income youths for jobs at blue-chip companies.

And that is exactly what Year Up founder Gerald Chertavian expects to happen. He created the nonprofit program 11 years ago after he and his business partners sold a technology-consulting company, Conduit Communications, for \$83 million. About 1,300 students in nine cities matriculate in Year Up annually. While in training, they're guaranteed six-month internships at top firms. After they graduate, 84% either land full-time jobs that pay an average of \$15 an hour, or enroll full time in college.

One of them, Greg Walton, has worked as a desktop-support specialist at MIT since 2007. "I was in foster care. I grew up living with random different family members; I'm rebuilding a relationship now with parents who battled drug addiction," he says. "I didn't have any guidance about how to become an adult, and I wouldn't be here today if it weren't for Year Up."

Says Chertavian: "Where you end up in life, in this country, has more to do with luck than anything else -- the size of your parents' bank accounts, the zip code where you grew up, your school district and your skin color."

Chance played a role in Chertavian's own life. The entrepreneur, who grew up and attended public school in Lowell, Mass., said he was lucky a teacher suggested he go to Bowdoin College. "He drove me to campus, showed me around and said, 'This is where you're going,' so convincingly that it was a surprise to me, later, when I still had to apply. The accident of success, of luck, isn't lost on me."

After college, while working for Chemical Bank in New York in 1987, Chertavian became a mentor himself, as a Big Brother volunteer to a 10-year-old boy who lived in a low-income housing project in Manhattan. "He and his brothers had ability and drive, and I saw this huge waste of human capital at a time when America couldn't afford to waste anybody," Chertavian says.

He left Chemical Bank for Harvard Business School -- his admissions essay proposed starting a business that sounded very much like Year Up -- and afterward moved to England, where his wife grew up. After selling Conduit he moved back to Boston to start Year Up. His first class of 22 students enrolled in July, 2001.

Chertavian has grand plans, to double the number of students and add three new cities within five years. Beyond that, the next phase, he hopes, will entail partnering with community colleges to provide a version of the program on campuses, enrolling as many as 100,000 students a year. Chertavian says only 8% of Americans earn college degrees between ages 18 and 22, which means, "We have a social responsibility to help the rest find the next step in life."

## ***Diana Barrett***

There's a scene, about 30 minutes into the documentary film *Born Into Brothels*, when the filmmaker pleads with a gray-haired nun on behalf of a handful of children who face an almost-certain life of prostitution if they don't escape Calcutta's notorious red-light district. The nun, whose kind eyes and blue wimple are straight from central casting, says, "We will take them." It's a heart-wrenching moment that makes you want to jump out of your seat -- to help people, to right wrongs, to fix everything in the world that's broken.

Diana Barrett was hooked. As she sat in the dark watching a rough cut in a Manhattan editing room in 2004, she wondered: Could you change the world by investing in documentaries?

This wasn't the sort of question that Barrett's comfortable Manhattan upbringing had prepared her to ask. Her stepfather had worked in banking, she had attended Convent of the Sacred Heart on the Upper East Side and, she says, "I was expected to grow up to join the Junior League and play golf." Instead, she went to Harvard Business School (where she sat next to Mitt Romney in class), married TV handyman Bob Vila and raised three children while teaching at Harvard.

By the time she saw *Born Into Brothels*, she and Vila had moved to New York from Boston. She was for the first time actively managing her family's \$7 million foundation, looking for useful causes to support. She gave a \$15,000 grant to *Born Into Brothels*, which went on not only to win an Oscar but also helped raise nearly \$1.2 million to build a boarding school in Calcutta.



Evan Kafka for Barron's

Diana Barrett backs documentary films that address tough issues.

Barrett's full-time obsession became figuring out how to get quantifiable returns from socially progressive films. In 2005, she created the Fledgling Fund, which rates films' impact based on such measures as audience size, frequency of screenings, extent of press coverage and whether they were cited in public discussions or policy debates.

For instance, after the Sundance Festival premiere last year of *Gasland*, a film about the controversial natural-gas drilling process known as "fracking," HBO aired the movie in 2010, and other media -- including a PBS news show and ABC News -- featured it on programs discussing safety concerns. The Fledgling Fund grantee was subsequently nominated for an Academy Award for best documentary. Last month, the New York Times Sunday magazine ran a lengthy article on fracking and described *Gasland* as "a popular tool" for anti-fracking groups to rally resistance.

The walls in Barrett's spartan New York office ("the rent's only \$1,500 a month; that leaves more money for film," she says) are covered with posters from her films. *Ghosts of Abu Ghraib*. *Very Young Girls*. *Lioness*. All tackle social issues, ranging from sexual exploitation of children to prisoner torture in the Middle East. Fledgling Fund grantees have helped change laws and have won eight Emmys and four Oscars in total.

These days, the Fledgling Fund receives about 800 applications a year. With assets that have grown to more than \$20 million, it awards about \$2 million annually in grants that average from \$25,000 to \$50,000.

Barrett often invites a filmmaker and strategists to brainstorm about how to get the most bang for the buck. For instance, before the 2007 film *King Corn* was released, Barrett arranged for filmmaker Curt Ellis to meet with representatives from the American Diabetes Association. The film is about how U.S. agricultural policy affects diets.

"We ended up showing the movie not just in cinemas in 60 cities, but also in church basements in small towns," Ellis says. Here, too, Barrett's attention to detail produced tangible results: Local farmers sat in the lobbies and signed up moviegoers to buy organic produce.

## ***Jeremy Guth***

When Jeremy Guth looks at a map of the western part of North America, he imagines pearls strewn across a necklace. The pearls are the national parks, from Yellowstone to the Yukon, that are scattered across the U.S. (where he grew up) and Canada (where he lives now).

The chain of the necklace -- the links between the parks -- is incomplete. But someday, Guth hopes, the pearls will be connected by "wildlife corridors," safe migration routes for animals that are in search of food or mates.

Guth, a trustee of the \$36 million Woodcock Foundation that his parents created, has been actively trying to connect the pearls since 1999, both by helping land conservationists buy strategic parcels and by encouraging efforts to build wildlife crossings for animals, including grizzly bears, elk, deer, wolves, cougars and coyotes. The goal is to prevent the more than 1.5 million collisions between cars and animals that the nonprofit Insurance Institute for Highway Safety estimates occur annually. The accidents cause more than 200 human fatalities a year, and researchers estimate the damage to humans, animals and vehicles at as much as \$8 billion.



Jean-Francois Berube for Barron's

Jeremy Guth is helping create thousands of miles of migration paths for wildlife in the West. Those will help grizzly bears, coyotes and others find food and mates.

Guth grew up in upstate New York, where his father was an executive at Corning. He loved nature, particularly the time spent at his grandparents' Woodcock Farm -- after which the family foundation is named -- in New Hampshire. After graduating from the University of Toronto, he married a Canadian woman and settled on a 17-acre farm on the outskirts of Montreal.

"I happen to live in a country that has a very different attitude toward its cultural heritage from the attitude the U.S. has, but when I immigrated 25 years ago, I brought an American approach to preserving my new country's heritage," he says. In the 1990s, he urged local officials to conduct a comprehensive study of historical buildings in his tiny town of Senneville, to protect them from development.



A former securities broker, Guth became involved in his family's foundation about 15 years ago. He began to attend conferences sponsored by the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative, a joint Canada-U.S. nonprofit organization that works to preserve wildlife habitats. There he learned about efforts to preserve the world's largest remaining stretch of ecologically intact mountain landscape -- a 2,000-mile-long swath of unspoiled land that extends from Yellowstone National Park northward through Canada's wild Yukon territory to the Arctic Circle.

"I was attracted to the idea that we can conserve something we still have -- rather than try to restore something that's been lost," Guth says.

At a location between Glacier National Park in Montana and Banff National Park in Alberta, land conservationists were promoting a new approach that would also benefit wildlife. "We thought maybe we could buy key pieces of land that ran perpendicular to Highway 3," Guth says. "Then we learned that Alberta was planning to widen the highway, making all of this conservation work completely futile."

Then Guth learned about wildlife crossings. "That's where I saw the solution," he says. A scientist at the Western Transportation Institute who had spent nearly 10 years gathering data to prove the efficacy of crossings was about to run out of money, in 2006. Guth put together a coalition of partners, including Woodcock, to contribute \$90,000 a year to pay to continue the research, an effort that included DNA profiling of animal hairs found at crossing points.

These days, the Woodcock Foundation gives hundreds of thousands of dollars a year to the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative. For six years, Guth sat on the group's board and helped devise ways to keep the spaces between parks open to wildlife.

"Jeremy took a big risk and put significant funding into the part of our operation that is entrepreneurial and innovative," says Rob Buffler, Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative executive director. "He helped us innovate."

Last year, the Woodcock Foundation co-sponsored a competition with a \$40,000 prize for designing a sturdy, low-cost wildlife crossing in the mountains of Colorado. The winning design, a bridge of lightweight concrete panels that can be snapped into place, "is something brilliant," Guth says. "It's adaptable to various sites and simple to construct."

The next step will be to build the crossing -- and roll out more like it. "We have a primary relationship with nature, and if we don't understand its importance, it's at our peril," Guth says.