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# VIEWPOINTS

## Spreading the love through Phoenix

The Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust has invested more than \$500 million in programs and initiatives that strengthen and enrich the community



**Your Turn**  
Mary Jane Rynd  
Guest columnist

Virginia Galvin Piper knew exactly what she was doing when she endowed \$590 million to the regional trust that bears her name.

She envisioned the continuation of her strategic, philanthropic investment into the community she treasured, and she expected her legacy to carry forward over many generations.

In 21 years, just one generation, Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust has invested more than \$512 million in nonprofits and programs that enhance the lives of people in Maricopa County.

With the endowment currently at \$550 million, the trust is in a strong position to continue to support advancements in the areas of health care and medical research, children, older adults, arts and culture, education and religious organizations.

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# Nonprofits

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A half-billion-dollar investment in the social profit sector has extraordinary ripple effects.

Dr. Anthony Evans, staff director and senior researcher with the L. William Seidman Research Institute at Arizona State University's W. P. Carey School of Business, said the economic impact of 500 million-plus philanthropic dollars on Maricopa County (granted, over 20-plus years) is estimated at more than 4,015 job years of employment; more than \$213.1 million in labor income; and, more than \$495.3 million in total contribution to the state's gross domestic product.

Another way of looking at the impact of a half-billion dollars is to imagine the Valley without the private investment in programs and initiatives that strengthen and enrich the community.

How would the region look and feel without the trust's \$168 million invested in health care and medical research, \$116 million for children and older adults, \$96 million in education, or \$70 million in arts and culture?

Where would much-needed education attainment improvement efforts be without foundational support for statewide strategies like Read On Arizona, the state's third grade reading initiative

that is producing results, or support to help Arizona land a \$20 million federal grant to improve the language and literacy skills of our most vulnerable children?

What are the total benefits of programs like Piper Fellows, which gives social profit leaders the time and resources they need to make transformational changes in their organizations?

Surpassing the \$500-million, grant-making milestone this year is less a celebration and more a cause for reflection on our founding mission, our world today and our role in a future of unknowns – where the only certainty is the need for more and better ways to help our community be strong and resilient.



**Piper**

From Virginia's first impressions of the Valley during visits after her husband, Motorola founder Paul Gavin, established a company presence here in 1946 to her permanent move to Phoenix in 1970 to her death in 1999, she was enamored with this community.

As her CPA for many years, I can tell you that although Virginia was an Illinois native, she believed in the promise of this place and its people, and she was certain of the return on investment in them.

She also believed in the power beyond finances of philanthropic endeavors,

something she saw firsthand when, upon her husband's death, she became administrator of the Paul V. Galvin Charitable Trust.

"For me," she said, "managing the stewardship of charitable giving is a moment-to-moment, dignified responsibility of truly a high calling in human affairs and human relations."

Virginia's giving was, indeed, relationship driven, built with conversations that involved more active listening than talking and with follow-up visits to beneficiaries. There was no "one and done" in her charitable work in the Valley. It was more like, "I see you. I hear you. Please tell me more. What do you need? What do the people doing the work need to do their jobs?"

Today, as trustees and staff who are responsible for carrying out Virginia's legacy through Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust, we are asking those same questions.

The times demand it.

They demand it of all of us in the philanthropic and nonprofit sectors as we work through the pandemic and its plethora of related challenges.

During this past year, the trust awarded an unprecedented \$37 million in grants, nearly 70% more than a typical year of grantmaking. COVID-19, of course, was the primary reason for the record grantmaking year.

We had to do things differently during a health and socioeconomic crisis.

Early in the pandemic, trustees worked swiftly to provide largely unrestricted dollars to nonprofit partners so that they could best serve the community.

While COVID-19 has caused turmoil requiring creative and rapid responses, the trust remains grounded in strategy with an eye to what can strengthen our community long term.

The trust's recent \$10 million grant to Creighton University for a medical partnership with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is an example. This is an investment that will help increase health care access, grow the pipeline of skilled medical professionals for Arizona and ultimately improve patient outcomes.

The potential of this medical collaboration is infinite. And it comes at a time when we need this type of hope for our future.

We know the past and the present impact the future. We are being reflective and working hard to ensure that we ask the right questions internally and externally to deepen our partnership with the community. No doubt, these conversations, with plenty of active listening on our part, will inform the next half-billion dollars of Piper Trust grantmaking.

Virginia's legacy demands it. Our community deserves it.

*Mary Jane Rynd is president and CEO of Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust. She has served as an officer of the Trust since 2001.*