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## PHILANTHROPY 2.0

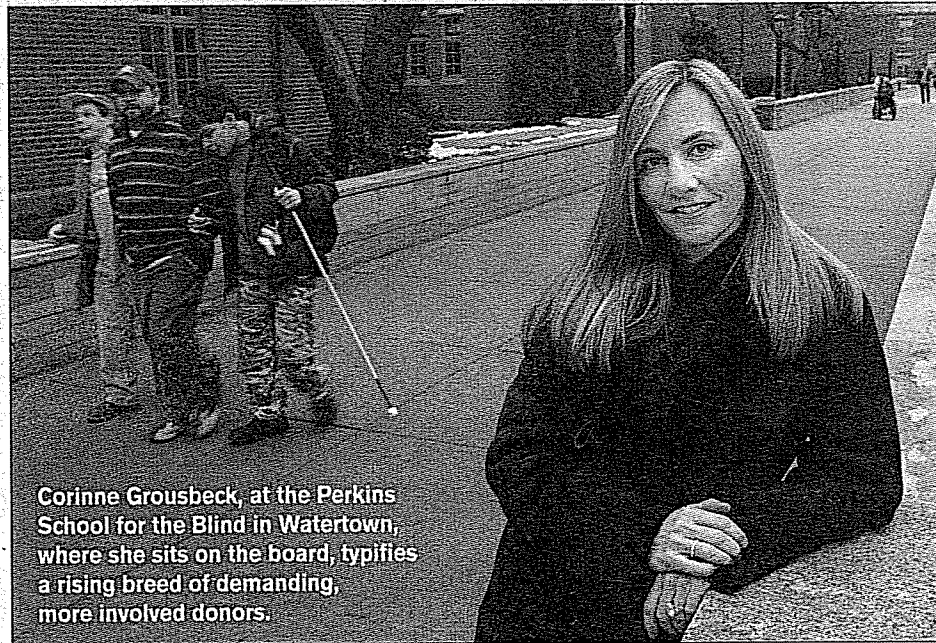
# Charity's new, focused breed of donor

BY NAOMI R. KOOKER  
JOURNAL STAFF

**I**t took a while for **Corinne Grousbeck** to commit to being a trustee on the board at the **Perkins School for the Blind** in Watertown. The 177-year-old school desperately needed computers and a new strategic plan — and money. The latter she had plenty of. But what she wanted to give most was her expertise in marketing and suggestions in how the school might pull itself into the 21st century. Would the board be receptive to her ideas?

Most importantly, she knew she needed patience and maturity: She didn't want her blind son, who was enrolled in the school, to interfere with her objectivity while serving on the board. On the other hand, if she did bring an agenda, she wanted to be prepared to fund it.

Grousbeck, 43, a former **Saatchi & Saatchi** vice president account super-



Corinne Grousbeck, at the Perkins School for the Blind in Watertown, where she sits on the board, typifies a rising breed of demanding, more involved donors.

visor and wife of **Wycliffe Grousbeck**, managing partner and CEO of the **Boston Celtics**, represents the new generation of givers who are affluent

individuals passionate about their cause, but cautious about where their

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money goes. Their gifts include time, much-needed skills and money given to a specific endeavor — to start a program, conduct research, improve operations or simply bolster a charity's visibility. Unlike their forbears or parents who often wrote checks, this generation wants to write checks *and* take action.

"It's not just writing a check and hoping something good happens," said **Paul Grogan**, executive director of **The Boston Foundation**. "Is there going to be a return on investment, and how will I know?"

The new philanthropy, say wealth watchers, includes more people at a younger age with more money and with energy looking for new direction in their lives. And nowhere is it more apparent than in Boston, where innovation and entrepreneurial ingenuity thrive.

"People are looking around," says **John Simon**, co-founder and managing director at **General Catalyst Partners** in Cambridge and co-founder and chairman of the nonprofit **GreenLight Fund**, which identifies and funds nonprofit organizations it believes can best address civic problems. "They are looking to do something with their time and money. The question is, what?"

As corporate donations become more fragmented and less reliable as a source of philanthropy funds in an atmosphere of rapid mergers and acquisitions, wealthier individuals, often with business backgrounds, have become increasingly important players in

the philanthropy scene. In addition, as the baby boomers age, vast amounts of wealth are being transferred to a generation that would rather target a few charities than write a dozen checks at the end of the year.

"They don't want to be scattershot about their giving anymore," says **Shari A. Levitan**, a lawyer and chair of private wealth services at **Holland & Knight LLP**.

## Shifting balance

All of this is forcing nonprofits to work harder to find scattered donors rather than rely on corporations alone.

Two Boston nonprofits — **The Home for Little Wanderers** and the **Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence Inc.** — have hired development staff within the last year-and-a-half for the sole purpose of focusing on engaging more individual funders. The staff is often better trained than before, carrying nonprofit-focused degrees from Harvard, and with a higher level of sophistication to find, if not attract, givers like Grousbeck.

Whereas **Gillette Co.** contributed \$35,000 to help support the Asian Task Force shelter in 2003; and gave \$25,000 in 2004, it gave nothing last year, leaving the organization's \$1.8 million operating budget short on cash.

"Right now we're looking for that money," said Asian Task Force Executive Director **Shirley Fan**. "We have to shift to individuals."

According to **Giving USA**, an annual report on philanthropy, corporate giving nationally has declined at a faster

pace than individual giving between 2000 and 2004. Locally, that perception is underscored through recent major mergers and acquisitions of some of Boston's top companies, while philanthropists say more individuals are stepping up to the plate.

Many of these affluent individuals hail from the VC sector, bringing their entrepreneurial know-how and mindset with them. Simon says his generation is looking for organizations that are not only passionate about their cause, but have a leadership track record that the funding investors can relate to. This new breed of philanthropist also wants to be given a clear path in how they can give of their time and skills to create the greatest impact.

Many are looking for ways to measure their investments. In response, nonprofits are noticing they have to operate differently in order to attract this widespread wealth.

**Lynn Margherio**, founder and CEO of **Cradles to Crayons Inc.** in Quincy, set her sights on middle- to high-income neighborhoods, temples, churches and schools for her toy and furniture drives.

"Your strategy needs to be convenient for your donors," says Margherio, who founded the nonprofit in 2002.

It was at a fund drive at **Buckingham Browne & Nichols**, a private school in Cambridge, when she met a parent who is a venture capitalist. The two hit it off. It was the startup status of Cradles to Crayons that attracted the young dad, who prefers to remain anonymous, to help her strategize and build the or-

ganization, she says. The organization has also benefited from this VC's small circle of friends who've given money or whose families have volunteered at the Quincy warehouse.

Fan says she's reframing her message about the 10-year-old Asian Task Force to be more attractive to donors, while staying true to the mission. Her emphasis on outcome — helping women become self-sufficient and giving back to the community — rather than the shelter just "makes sense."

"Donors have so much options out there," says Fan. "They have to make sense of their money, so when they have so many choices, nonprofit agencies have to make sense to make investments more accountable and practical. That's what the new trend of charitable giving is right now."

Grousbeck joined the Perkins board at a time when a like-minded, newly inducted president of the school also wanted the same things she wanted: computers, upgraded technology and a better marketing strategy to bring more visibility — and dollars — to the school she calls the "Harvard School for the blind." She is heading the spring gala set for May, which will command \$300 a ticket. Grousbeck says she's interested in "moving the needle" — getting nonprofits to make changes that improve the lives of their constituents.

"Sometimes people give from a place of discomfort," says Grousbeck. "(You have to be) willing to make the ask."