

MONTECITO DIARY

by Julia Rodgers

Engaged Philanthropy



Gerry Flake of Social Venture Partners, Naomi Schwartz of the Gildea Foundation, Dave Davis of the Community Environmental Council, Kay Sanchez of Art from Scrap and Ron Gallo of the Santa Barbara Foundation on the day the Social Venture Partners awarded checks to the CEC and Art from Scrap

Five years ago, **Claude and Susan Case** moved to Montecito from Phoenix, and while they were content to leave behind the scorching summer heat, they missed a collective giving group of which they had been members called Social Venture Partners.

Started in Seattle in 1997, Social Venture Partners was founded by high-tech industry folks who wanted to pursue philanthropy the same way they had pursued business. They came up with a venture capital model way of donating both money and time together, lending their expertise to a non-profit over several years. The cutting-edge idea soon earned the label "engaged philanthropy" in the non-profit world, and spread to other cities quickly.

Big cities like Phoenix, Los Angeles and Boston had chapters of Social Venture Partners, but nothing like it existed in Santa Barbara – so the Cases decided to start one here, partnering with the Santa Barbara Foundation to bring it to life. With the help of three other founding partners, Social Ventures Partners Santa Barbara earned its charter in 2008.

"It was a two-year process just to get things going," said Claude Case, who like many of his fellow partners was successful in business before moving here. But since that time, Social Venture Partners has made huge strides, including attracting 68 members, giving out a total of \$224,000 to seven local non-profits, and donating thousands of hours of time and expertise to those organizations.

Social Venture Partners Santa Barbara is an affiliate of the umbrella organization headquartered in Seattle; there are 26 other affiliates in North America and Japan that share the same mission and organizational set up as the one here. "There are over 2,000 partners in North America doing the

same thing we're doing," Case said. "It's a wonderful support group."

Here in Santa Barbara, the two most recent beneficiaries of Social Venture Partners' generosity are the



Julia Rodgers lives in Montecito with her husband and two young sons. She is a former journalist and lawyer who moved here from Chicago eight years ago.

Community Environmental Council, which received \$36,500, and Art from Scrap, which received \$36,800. The Gildea Foundation contributed to the CEC gift; the Santa Barbara Foundation contributed to both.

The Good Cookie

But the checks handed over last month are just the beginning of the investment Social Venture Partners plan to make in these two environmental organizations. "The monetary grant is a small part of the overall investment we make," Case said. "We give some money and we give some of our talent; it's a more meaningful experience for us and for the organizations."

For example, Social Venture Partners partnered with the homeless shelter Casa Esperanza two years ago and came up with a plan called "The Good Cookie" project. Using the Community Kitchen at night, residents bake cookies under the supervision of a professional baker and sell them in the community. The project raises money for Casa Esperanza, but more importantly, it provides job training for its residents.

"Rather than looking to just sell cookies, we're also getting residents involved and we've now had ten peo-



Social Venture Partners include Neil Dipaola, Paul Gertman, Marianne Gertman, Susan Case, Ron Gallo, Gary Becker and Claude Case



Laurie Ashton of Social Venture Partners announced "The Good Cookie" project with Casa Esperanza

ple get back into the workforce," said **Ed McAniff**, the lead partner from Social Ventures who oversees the project, which is ongoing. "Generating revenue is a great thing, but putting people back to work may be even more important."

Of course, McAniff and his fellow partners are not actually baking any cookies. But with their connections and marketing expertise, Casa Esperanza has just gotten a big break: more than 20 Whole Foods stores located in western states have agreed to sell the cookies, and lawyers who are members of Social Venture Partners are working on getting a trademark for the idea. (The Good Cookie is available at Montecito Village Grocery, among other local retailers if you'd like to try one.)

Social Venture Partners has had

similar success with the other non-profit organizations it has sponsored, which includes WillBridge of Santa Barbara, a homeless shelter; YMCA's Youth and Family Services "My Home Project," which helps foster children once they turn 18; the Mental Health Association in Santa Barbara; and the Goleta Valley Housing Committee, which is about to pay off a 40-year mortgage on a 76-unit housing project.

\$6,000 a year

"We try very hard to make ourselves be heard but almost invisible," said **Larry Koppelman**, who joined the group last year. "We want the organizations to grow but we don't want to take them over."

Just like Claude and Susan Case, McAniff and his wife, **Nora**, were new to Montecito when they joined the Social Venture Partners. All partners donate \$6,000 a year to join the group, and the group follows a democratic process in deciding where the collective gift will go.

"We make a financial contribution, but you can actually see where your dollars are going and you can see results," McAniff said, adding, "I find it enormously rewarding."

In addition to the volunteer work, partners have enjoyed an active social schedule as well, a coincidental side benefit. "We've met some really great like-minded people," McAniff said. "I love it!"

If you are interested in joining the Social Venture Partners, contact Executive Director **Joan Young** at (805) 689-9931 or email her at: jyoung@svpsb.org. More information is available at: www.svpsb.org.

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