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Philanthropy is vital to region

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These are perilous times for businesses, foundations and individuals trying to make our world a bit kinder and gentler. First the global financial crisis has shrunk profits and assets previously available for charitable giving. Then investment scandals shake our trust and cost more precious resources. Next rare but serious allegations of wrongdoing at nonprofit organizations cast a shadow over the good works of so many others. What's a well-meaning corporate citizen to do?

This is a critical question for our region since businesses and other philanthropists step up in a big way. Every week we read about their generosity. A recent study on Commonwealth Giving documented more than \$1 billion in annual contributions from area foundations, with individuals and businesses adding significantly to that amount. Philanthropy is too vital to the economic and social well-being of our region to take for granted or allow to run scared.

When uncertainty abounds and greater vigilance is required, one thing is for sure: it is not the time to go it alone. Fortunately, local and national resources exist to guide and support effective philanthropy. Delaware Valley Grantmakers is one of 33 regional associations across the country that pull together the best thinking, information and practical advice for all kinds of grantmakers. DVG's more than 150 members benefit from sharing the tools and experiences of grantmaking, while the region benefits from smart and serious philanthropy.

In its role as the region's forum for philanthropy, DVG advocates the application of best business practices, including accountability and transparency, for itself and its members. Financial, governance and assessment models are provided to help members fulfill their legal, ethical and fiduciary responsibilities as good stewards of private money used for public good. In turn, grantmakers look for nonprofits seeking funding to exercise the same high standards and professionalism.

Beyond compliance with important procedures, DVG encourages quality philanthropy through continuous learning, collaboration and communication among funders, nonprofits and government partners. Issue-oriented education programs, online and print publications and networking events are offered. Informed corporate grantmakers are more likely to make sound philanthropic decisions and identify opportunities that are a good strategic fit with their business mission, support employee volunteerism and help communities grow stronger.

Tough times exacerbate the challenges of effective giving. Community needs are growing and private philanthropy cannot fill all the gaps. Yet signs are that the area's corporate and foundation community is doing everything possible to maintain its philanthropic leadership. Every day grantmakers in our region are working together to ease the burdens and create opportunities for their fellow citizens. Their acts are an expression of confidence and optimism that can carry us through today's perils to a more promising future.

DEBRA KAHN is executive director of Delaware Valley Grantmakers, www.dvg.org.