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## Area Blessed With Charitable Support

The Tampa Tribune

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This may be the giving season, but for Tampa Bay charities helping others is a year-round task.

As the Tribune's Ellen Gedalius recently reported, "In the Tampa metropolitan area, which includes St. Petersburg and Clearwater, there are 327 foundations with \$882 million in assets. They gave away \$83 million in 2005."

One of the most important is the Community Foundation of Tampa Bay. In its 17 years of existence the foundation has accumulated \$148 million in assets, which puts it 68th nationally among charitable foundations. Its grants and projects put it in the top 15 percent in giving.

Charity Navigator, which evaluates the effectiveness of charities, recently rated it the best community foundation in the nation. Its overhead is less than 1 percent.

You do not get that kind of efficiency when government is doling out the dollars to nonprofits.

And because the foundation is an endowment, it's literally the community gift that keeps on giving.

The foundation aids arts groups, museums, high school orchestras, neighborhood associations, the Salvation Army, United Way, Alpha House, The Spring, the Boys & Girls Clubs of Tampa Bay, public and private schools, animal protection groups, hospitals, migrant groups, churches, Habitat for Humanity and dozens of other worthy causes.

Long before government social programs became the norm, individuals and philanthropic organizations provided help for the poor, hungry and disabled.

As foundation president David J. Fischer notes, governments funding can be uncertain, but local charities can depend on the foundation's support, regardless of who's elected or what happens to the economy.


Americans, reviled in much of the world for being selfish and materialistic, are exceptionally generous. Last year they gave almost \$300 billion to charitable causes, an average of about \$1,000 per person in a nation of 300 million people.

The Community Foundation of Tampa Bay is an impressive example of how those good intentions can be efficiently transformed into good works.

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