



Statement

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Just a cursory review of headlines on various news sites might lead one to think there are no positive stories to be told in our country. If you dig deeper, however, there is, in fact, good news to share, at least from my perspective. And that good news is that individual Americans, our country's foundations and our corporations continue to be generous during a time of slow economic growth. Even while there is uncertainty here at home brought about in part due to European economic issues and slowed business expansion in China, we see that philanthropy continues to resonate as a key component of our nation's fabric. In fact, charitable giving rose to \$298.42 billion in 2011.

Examining that overall figure in closer detail – just like going beyond the headlines – is important to understanding both strengths and potential vulnerabilities in the philanthropy picture, though, and *Giving USA's* annual report accomplishes that mission by breaking down the big number into its component parts.

The data in the report tell quite a story about America and its citizens' view of philanthropy, as measured by continued willingness to give to causes that they feel are important. In studying these data – in conjunction with the news headlines – I think there are some clear considerations for this particular time in our country's history that directly relate to philanthropic causes:

- With slow economic growth comes continued stress on many household budgets. This means that social and human services issues continue, and thus demands on the social services sector also continue.
- The cost of higher education (and recent political discussions around student loans) has created an even stronger case for the need of philanthropic support for our colleges and universities. It is good to note that people have responded by supporting education across the entire sector with their dollars.
- What adds to the richness of the human experience are the cultural institutions across the country, and they too received an increase in giving during the past year. My own experience working with orchestras and museums around the nation confirms to me that they fulfill our need to be inspired by our past, create

a reflection about who we are, and provide the inspiration and fulfillment of our dreams to come.

- We do live in the land of “plenty” and it is good to see that generosity has been growing to meet the needs of those who have been stricken by the economy here at home as well as internationally. My sense for the future is that this will continue for many, many years to come, because philanthropy is a crucial trait of our American Heritage.