



Finding philanthropists

By Neil D. Steinberg, President & CEO
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“Philanthropy makes people feel good. You get a real joy from giving,” says James V. Aukerman, an estate planning attorney at Orson & Brusini’s Wakefield office.

It’s a joy Jim knows well. A long-time supporter of the local nonprofit community, he has served on boards, advisory councils, and fundraising committees for a multitude of organizations including the South Kingstown Land Trust, Narragansett Council-Boy Scouts of America, South Country Hospital, and Kingston Congregational Church. He and his wife, Karin, also have a donor advised fund at the Foundation and are members of the legacy society, the 1916 Society. Jim also is a former member of the Professional Advisory Council and recipient of the Foundation’s Harold B. Soloveitzik Professional Leadership Award.

“I always introduce philanthropy to the conversation with my clients. They don’t ordinarily come in with charitable giving in mind when they want to create a will or do other estate planning, but it can get people thinking. That’s where the role of the advisor is so important,” he believes.

A graduate of South Kingstown High School, Dartmouth College, and the Suffolk University Law School, Jim has been a trust and estate attorney in Wakefield for more than four decades. He notes that less than half of Americans have a will and estimates that between one in ten and one in fifteen of those is charitably inclined. He realizes, “You’re drawing from a fairly small pool. But I do come across people – especially people who don’t have children – who are interested, and then we get deeper into a conversation. This gives me the opportunity to mention the Foundation, to talk about what a gift in perpetuity means, and how the Foundation manages the funds. People like the idea of a gift continuing forever and of creating a legacy to honor the memory of a loved one.”

“For most people, philanthropy is something you have to learn and be taught. It doesn’t always come naturally,” Jim shares.

He recalls his introduction to philanthropy when, as a young attorney, he felt the deep satisfaction of making his first significant contribution through the Wakefield Rotary Club’s support of a campaign for the local YMCA.

It’s a lesson he’s happy to share with his clients.

