



Profiles in Family Philanthropy

Each month, *Family Giving News* celebrates the legacies and philanthropic contributions of family philanthropists all over the world by highlighting the story of one philanthropic donor or family in "Profiles in Family Philanthropy."

Profiles 2007

MAY/JUNE 2007: The Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies

Charles Bronfman returned from a trustees' meeting of the Mount Sinai Medical Center with an idea. Bronfman, Chairman and co-founder with his late wife Andrea of the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies, had heard of the Medical Center's efforts in the emerging field of personalized medicine. Dr. Jeffrey Solomon, President of the Philanthropies, recalls, "He came back to the foundation and said, 'Would we do some homework in this arena?'"

The result of that homework: a \$12.5-million grant to Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York to establish the Charles Bronfman Institute for Personalized Medicine. Called a "leadership gift," the grant aims to support a new approach to medicine which utilizes information about a person's genetic make-up to more effectively detect, treat, and prevent disease. Like many of the Philanthropies' efforts, it represents a significant investment in "the next generation," in this case, the next generation of genetics research and genomics-based medicine.

In Memoriam: Andrea Bronfman

Andrea Morrison Bronfman, co-chair of The Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies, tragically passed away January 23, 2006 as the result of injuries sustained in a traffic accident. Through her leadership at ACBP and numerous other philanthropic endeavors, she was a shaping force in initiatives aimed at strengthening Jewish identity worldwide, with a focus on Jewish youth, the arts and education. In 2003, she and her husband, Charles, were named honorary citizens of Jerusalem, the first North American Jews and the first couple to receive this historic honor. Andrea Bronfman was 60 years old.

Known to friends and colleagues as Andy, Bronfman also served as Founder and Deputy Chairman of The Gift of New York, a non-profit initiative which provided admission to New York City's cultural, arts, entertainment and sports venues, without charge, to the bereaved families of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. The program, intended to give solace to the grieving families, ran through the spring of 2003 and served

12,000 families.

Deeply concerned for the fate of the arts in an Israel in the midst of the second Intifada, Bronfman created [AIDA: The Association for Israel's Decorative Arts](#) in 2003. AIDA would expose Israeli artists to North American galleries and collectors and educate North Americans about the decorative arts in Israel. The Association supports arts fairs, museum exhibitions, and fellowships for contemporary decorative artists. AIDA co-founders Doug and Dale Anderson [note](#), "Andy formed a particularly strong bond with AIDA's artists. Each artist became a part of an extended family and like family, Andy celebrated each artist's achievements with the pride of a mother."

On his wife's sixtieth birthday in 2005, Charles Bronfman established [The Andrea M. Bronfman Prize for the Arts](#) ("The Andy") to honor his wife's life-long passion for and support of the arts, and to create a showcase for Israeli decorative artists.

Since her passing, Solomon says, the Philanthropies have worked to "honor her memory by assuring that those projects of special interest to her would continue without her energy, tenacity, and leadership to guide them." AIDA's latest project, for instance, is [Offering Reconciliation](#): 135 prominent Israeli and Palestinian artists, sculptors and photographers were each given an identical ceramic dish – a bowl of reconciliation – upon which to express a personal interpretation of the healing process. The project includes a traveling exhibition and catalog with proceeds financing educational activities in Israeli and Palestinian schools.

Andrea is still listed both on AIDA's website and the Philanthropies' websites as co-chair just as any other trustee or staff member might be-- save for the Hebrew honorific beside her name "ז'"--*Zichrono Livrocho*, meaning "Of Blessed Memory."

Currently, medicine operates with a one-size-fits-all, "evidence-based" approach: symptoms present themselves; various tests are performed; diseases are diagnosed and then treated with appropriate drugs and procedures. But when every person is different, this approach can have its downside. Symptoms can present themselves in various ways or not at all for some time, making some disorders difficult to diagnose. Different people can respond in different ways to the same treatment, making some conditions difficult to treat. This evidence-based approach, thus, relies on trial-and-error and lacks precision. Personalized medicine, by contrast, is a genomics-based approach and gives doctors answers based on an individual's unique set of genes in order to reduce uncertainty and error in diagnosis and treatment.

What Dr. Kenneth Davis, President of the Medical Center, hails as "the most important medical revolution taking place today" is not without its critics. Detractors worry about the expense of designer tests and drugs in an age when many are uninsured and about possible genetic discrimination, such as insurance companies denying coverage on the basis of a person's genetic predispositions. Advocates contend that personalized medicine is so revolutionary that it will advance medicine beyond the terms of current criticisms.

Solomon asserts, "Personalized medicine is something that will fundamentally alter the medical industry and forever redefine the role of ubiquitous players such as insurance and pharmaceutical companies." He argues, "If one takes a look at the history of medicine, every time there's any kind of serious advancement, there are serious public policy issues that emerge. It usually then follows that there's a debate and change to the laws and regulations to support the best solution to the challenge that is posed."

For Solomon, the Bronfman grant, \$12.5 million over the next ten years, "comes at a moment when philanthropy can play a fulcrum kind of role in personalized medicine. Ultimately, [pharmaceutical companies] are still based on economic models of blockbuster drugs. They have not yet made the translational shift to much more personalized drugs." Philanthropy, however, can be what he calls "society's R&D arm."

"Because [philanthropy] is not influenced by either market forces or politics," Solomon contends, "it is uniquely able to evaluate and move on opportunities. Private industry relies on economic models and the market place. Government relies on political drivers, often mitigated by competing forces. However, history demonstrates that once the societal value of a change is observable, those forces change to move both the economy and government. With the potential for personalized medicine, philanthropy is well positioned to play that traditional catalytic role."

When asked why the Mount Sinai Medical Center was chosen as the home for the new Institute, Solomon points to the fact that "it has under one administrative structure and one trustee structure both a medical school and a hospital. That's a critical variable for real breakthroughs." Dr. Erwin Bottinger, the Institute's Director, asserts, "The uniquely seamless relationship between our hospital and our medical school has Mount Sinai poised to lead research efforts...and to immediately translate our advances to benefit our patients on a clinical level."

But Solomon also notes the crucial Bronfman family connection to Mount Sinai. Charles Bronfman's brother Edgar served as a trustee of Mount Sinai Medical Center from 1957 to 1985. The Center's internal medicine department bears the name of their father and Seagrams founder Samuel Bronfman. When Charles was asked to serve as a trustee, he did and has done so since 2002. It was as a trustee that he learned of the Center's efforts in personalized medicine and moved on the opportunity the endeavor presented.

Indeed, the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies are characterized by this desire to catalyze change on behalf of the next generation, whoever that might be. It is a desire that channels the personal and perhaps arbitrary--but nonetheless meaningful and vital--values, attachments and connections of family into making a difference for others. The Philanthropies' website states, "In the broadest sense, The Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies seeks to nourish the deep and fundamental human desire to belong to a community and to help individuals forge connections between their deeper selves and issues of identity, meaning and community. In so doing, we hope to improve the world."

The Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies is a family of charitable foundations operating in Canada, Israel, and the United States. You can learn more about the Philanthropies and their work on their [website](#).