

Glorya Kaufman

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Kaufman has never forgotten the transforming power of dance. Although she didn't pursue it as a career, her marriage to developer Donald Bruce Kaufman, the founder of Kaufman & Broad, the Fortune 500 company devoted to custom residential and commercial construction, provided her with an outlet for her philanthropy. Seeing the social, therapeutic and communicative powers of dance is what touches her heart and makes her a "hands-on philanthropist," according to J. Ronald Reed, vice president of strategic planning for the Glorya Kaufman Dance Foundation. "She likes long-term projects and she's a participant, working with groups to make sure that they have a successful program."

There was no one moment for Kaufman when her philanthropic streak kicked in. It was always a part of her upbringing, she explains. During her humble childhood, her parents instilled within her the Jewish tradition of tzedakah, which entails creating a just world through acts of loving kindness that, depending on the circumstances, might involve a person's time and might or might not involve money. At times, she has contributed to health causes, various art museums, and built libraries, but dance remains her number one priority.



Kaufman, the dancing philanthropist, understands that dance may be one of the least understood of the performing arts, but she sees its power to bring people together. Her theory is that many people go through life as bookends on opposite ends of the shelf. They never touch and spend little time communicating. When children are exposed to dance, they understand music and move to it immediately. They can feel a sense of accomplishment in a short amount of time, insists Kaufman. Otherwise, "kids get into trouble if they have nothing to do," says Reed.

In Los Angeles, Kaufman's contributions are responsible for a restoration of the earthquake-damaged dance building on the UCLA campus and for matching grants that helped build the Donald Bruce Kaufman Brentwood Library. A new youth center with a dance training facility is due to open in late January at the Mar Vista Family Center, which services at-risk kids. After a recent visit to the center, the kids yelled and screamed her name when Kaufman left. "She's become 'their Glorya,'" explains Carolyn B. Baker, executive director of the Glorya Kaufman Dance Foundation. The experience personifies the ways in which Kaufman believes dance can play a positive role in people's lives: improving self-esteem, giving a psychological boost to the young and elderly, and teaching people traditions and culture. There's a joy and a great satisfaction to seeing others enjoy their lives. It's her greatest motivation.

In Manhattan, her efforts are responsible for a new, glass-enclosed dance studio at the Julliard School scheduled to open in March 2009. Her endowment has built a new Glorya Kaufman Dance Pavilion at the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's headquarters. Also, she has funded AileyCamp, a program in Los Angeles for inner-city kids, the Ailey School, which trains young dancers, and scholarships for an Ailey program at Fordham University.

Many years ago, Kaufman took painting lessons. When she stopped, her loss was society's gain. As she explains, "When I stopped painting, my canvas became the people in the world."