

It's about time
“Don't give it up, you got an empty cup only love can fill...”
By Jill Matlow, Wall Street Dead aHead Family Member



Photo courtesy of pixabay.com

I wish I had more time to spend with my dad. Unfortunately, he passed away in October. He remained in relatively good health and I was fortunate to have him until he turned almost 91. One of the things the rabbi touched upon during his funeral service was how giving my dad was and how he had always done his “charity work” in a quiet manner when helping those less fortunate. He quoted C.S. Lewis: *“Integrity is doing the right thing, even when no one is watching.”* How lucky I was to have such a great role model.

When Deb Solomon and I were discussing a topic for my last article for 2022, we talked about how important it is to give of our time and resources, especially to the disadvantaged. How ironic. My dad would have loved this article. This one's for you dad.

In reflecting on the past year, I think we can all agree it's one for the books—natural disasters, ongoing pandemics, crazy fluctuations in the market—to name a few. Seems like so much of it is out of our control. But the one thing we do have control over is our time and how we choose to spend it. Donating time is an immeasurable gift to those on the receiving end.

In 2017, I started volunteering at the [Pajama Program](#), an organization that provides new pajamas, books, and sleep health education to those children facing adversity, many of whom are living in foster homes or low income housing. Their goal is to make sure these children have the tools they need to have better bedtimes. Their tagline: *“Good days are good nights”* really exemplifies what their mission is all about.

Deb knew how important the Pajama Program was to me and made them the 2018 Affiliate Charity for WSDaH. Through that successful partnership, they gained volunteers as well as sponsors and donations. I'm excited to report that the Pajama Program's Reading Center located at East 39th and Lexington Avenue in NYC is now open again for those who want to volunteer. Feel free to click here for more [information](#).

Over the years, so many of the WSDaH Family members have donated their time in various ways. It was difficult for me to narrow down the list to just three people to share their stories, but I think you'll all agree, their stories are an inspiration to all of us:

“When I had no wings to fly...you flew to me’. From the lyrics to the lot, the Grateful Dead community is an immersion into the theory of community abundance—a worldview to see more choices and paths and a ‘take what you need and leave the rest’ belief system. Leave it to the Deadheads to turn the word ‘miracle’ into a verb!

With that backdrop, it should come as no surprise that the scene has created such real positive momentum towards giving back and philanthropy, especially among Deadheads. A Dead tour is a front row seat to the generosity of the community. From the early free concerts, to breaking the bank on sound equipment so everyone could hear the show, The Rainforest Shows (‘Somebody has to do something...it seems pathetic that it has to be us’—Jerry), to the decades long work of the [Rex Foundation](#) and the countless ‘miracles’, generosity is front and center...right by the taper section.

So after the glow of a sweet ‘Bid You Goodnight’ encore, when we all shuffle back into real life, that spirit comes along for the ride.

Here’s how it happened for me:

Roll back to the formation of the [Hell or High Water Band](#) in 1989. I had been in bands since high school and it was clear early on this particular crew really connected on the magic of it all and we knew right then that this band was going to be special. What we didn’t know was that the band would open up completely different doors to amazing opportunities for us to be a part of some wonderful charitable endeavors.

One of our earliest gigs in 1990 was a charity run for the [Kenny Dolan Scholarship Fund](#)-Iona College.

Kenny was a friend and ran track for Iona. Following his tragic passing, his friends, all in their early 20s, quickly established a scholarship fund at Iona College for the benefit of students in need. They asked us to volunteer with the band for the after party, and the rest is history. Turns out we played that gig for 25 years...the event continues to sponsor scholarships, 33 years on. A funny aside, back then we only had about 10 or 15 tunes...so we played them all a few times. But those gigs put us on the map, made us better players and we learned that the gift flows both ways.

Since then we have been ready, willing and able to get on the bus for some amazing charities. Beyond the playing, we are incredibly grateful to meet and really get to know the people who give their time to create these channels of philanthropy. The people and their passion...the fund raisers and the beneficiaries...the doctors and the patients...the volunteers and the donors. A few hours of doing what we love, to play a small part in an event...we walk away knowing that there is good out there and there are people who commit themselves to making a difference in this world.

Thanks to these charities, we have played rooms we never dreamed of like: Webster Hall, The Hard Rock, The Cutting Room and Garcia’s at the Cap and we see it all come back around. Becoming close and being the ‘house band’ for these groups brings an incredible dynamic to our music and it’s right there every single time:

[The Frances Pope Memorial Foundation](#)

[FreeFrom](#)

[Michael j. Fox Foundation](#)

[The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society](#)

[The Breezy Point Disaster Relief Fund](#)

And with special thanks to the WSDaH Family:

[WhyHunger](#)

[The Queen Elizabeth II Garden](#) and [Tuesday's Children](#)

Whatever we call the collective experience...it sticks and I am convinced that the scene raises awareness to the importance of finding one's own road to give back, help out and reach out your hand. But when all the cards are down, I can say with confidence that it is a rare privilege to bring a little music and some of that good ol Grateful Dead spirit to these worthy causes."

[Tom Wipf](#), Vice Chairman, [Morgan Stanley](#)/Guitar player, [Hell or High Water Band](#)

"My success on Wall Street had a lot to do with some great teachers, but mostly because I was white, male and went to a good college where I could pick up 'connections' (and graduate without debt!). A product of 'white privilege' if there ever was one. I played golf, if I could call it work, and tournament squash for over 30 years.

When I retired I ran into some extremely successful squash friends who had decided to use squash as a hook into an after-school program for young people from very challenging circumstances. I now volunteer at the [Lenfest Center](#) in North Philadelphia several times a month in the [SquashSmarts](#) program. To quote their mission statement: 'SquashSmarts is dedicated to improving the lives of underserved youth from Philadelphia public schools by providing intensive, long-term academic tutoring and squash instruction, while imparting high standards of personal integrity, health and fitness, and service to the community.'

In addition to volunteering at SquashSmarts, I also tutor writing, a skill which is critical and slowly being lost. If you can't put a thought on paper you're going to struggle. English is also a second language for many so I can just help with idioms and context.

And once the schoolwork is done?

We get on the courts and teach these students the skills and nuance within the game of squash. It's hard physically and takes mental discipline as well. These kids love it and develop into players who will be very attractive to schools with a squash program.

I'll never forget my first encounter with a 12-year-old player who wanted to 'play a few games.' I'm 67 but I still have some skill so I thought I should be easy on this little man. He beat me...the coaches were laughing and I truly believe that they totally set me up. I beat him the next week but I paid the price. Had to ice my hamstrings for an hour!

In addition to the time I devote to the Lenfest Center and SquashSmarts, I also worked on the Board of the [Philadelphia Orchard Project](#) for seven years, two as President. Our mission was to provide gardens and orchards in neighborhoods where residents had no access to fresh produce if they didn't own a car.

I'm now on the finance and facilities committees of the [Awbury Arboretum](#) in the Germantown section of Philadelphia. The challenges here are to preserve a green space in the heart of what was once a decent neighborhood and has rapidly declined. Awbury is a national treasure which needs help shaking off its past and emerging as a shining light for what can be done to improve a neighborhood aiming to revitalize its green space. Giving back is important...just do it!!!"

[Michael Drennan](#), Board Member, [Awbury Arboretum](#)

"I feel I was put on this planet to improve the quality of life and public's perception of individuals with disabilities. From an extremely young age, I had strong interests, and I was especially fascinated by individuals with developmental differences of all kinds. While my childhood friends chatted about pop stars, I stood in silence trying not to be noticed. I had nothing to contribute to this common conversation. I had been home watching Helen Keller's story in 'The Miracle Worker.'

In second grade, I voluntarily befriended and mentored a classmate with Downs Syndrome, Stephanie. We reportedly had a beautiful relationship and my teachers at the time felt I taught her more than they did. That same year, and for many years thereafter, when asked what I wanted to be when I grew up, I stated 'a teacher like Annie Sullivan when she taught Helen Keller.'

In middle school, my Mom brought me to work with her in Buffalo, NY during my summer break. While she worked as the marketing director at a law firm, I volunteered at the inner-city preschool next door. I met Ebony, who had been biting others for months. I gently and matter-of-factly explained to her the purpose of our teeth. I conveyed that teeth are in fact for allowing us to eat and be nourished, and to help us articulate our feelings and ideas; they are not meant to injure others. I observed Ebony stop biting that summer, and was told the effect lasted.

By high school, I was working as a summer camp counselor and became the 'go-to' person for a camper with autism, who worried incessantly about the weather. I was able to connect with and comfort him with ease. In college, I became a respite care provider for a family with two boys, Andrew and Tommy, then four and five respectively, and both on the autism spectrum. This family became a second family to me. I was able to care for Andrew and Tommy with compassion and intuition in a way no one in their biological family had been able to do. Their parents were able to leave their home to go on a date for the first time in five years. I love these boys. I heard some of their first words. Today, I am happily committed to the role of 'godparent,' along with my husband Max.

All of these experiences led me to pursue a Bachelor's Degree in Education and teaching certification as a special educator. Early on in my career, I found a job as 'Annie Sullivan.' I moved from my home in Upstate New York to Northern California to homeschool Michelle, a then ten-year-old girl with autism. Teaching Michelle was one of the most powerful, challenging, and rewarding experiences I have had to date. Over the course of two years, Michelle progressed from being functionally non-verbal and disconnected, to a young woman with vast interests, capable of asking thoughtful and insightful questions, and of expressing genuine care, concern, and curiosity for others around her. While working with Michelle, it became abundantly clear to me that communication skills are essential in order to live and function with maximum happiness, independence, dignity, and freedom. I returned to school, received my Master's Degree in Speech Language Pathology, and have since worked with over a hundred autistic children and young adults to help them improve their connection, communication skills, and functional capacities.

For the first time while attending music festivals, I experienced a judgment-free space where peace and unity exist. A place where individuals from many different walks of life can gather for days, living harmoniously in community and exuding joyful energy. This energy invites the possibility of contentment, relaxation, and the reduction of inhibitions. It allows individuals to become fully present, strengthen self-awareness, explore passions and interests, build relationships, and connect with inner purpose to guide and sustain positive lifestyle choices that extend far beyond the festival grounds.

For these reasons, festivals have had a profoundly positive impact on my way of life. My innate ability to connect with individuals with disabilities and my transformative experiences attending music festivals inspired the creation of the Inclusion Festival. Inclusion Festival is the nation's first sensory-friendly music, yoga, and wellness festival, celebrating individual differences and offering a space where community members can come together to support, and learn from, individuals who are differently abled by building connections through various forms of art. As part of my commitment to the cause, I've decided to forego a salary in perpetuity as I believe so much in this initiative. I look forward to playing a part in shifting the public's perception of disabilities, highlighting the potential individuals of all abilities hold to positively impact society when they are able to feel safe and accepted."

[Amy Pinder](#), MA, CCC-SLP, Co-Founder of [Inclusion Festival](#) and the Executive Director of [Accessible Festivals](#)

My dad served in the Korean War, was President of Meals on Wheels and the Lions Club and actively participated in numerous other charities during his lifetime. To honor his memory, I hope to continue doing the type of philanthropic work he so cherished and what I know would make him feel proud.

To quote Jonathan Larson: "No day but today"

Dedicated to you dad, with love always ❤️



***Theodore "Teddy" Matlow
(December 20, 1931-October 23, 2022)***