Helen K. Persson Receives the Ellis Island Medal of Honor

On June 2, 2012, Helen K. Persson, the Kravis Center Life Trustee who graciously lends her name to our endowment society, was awarded the prestigious Ellis Island Medal of Honor. Rear Adm. Philip A. Whitacre (Ret.) invited community leaders, friends and family to celebrate this historic occasion at a private reception hosted in the elegant Palm Beach home of Nasser Kazeminy and his wife, Yvonne. Mr. Kazeminy is Chairman of the National Ethnic Coalition of Organizations (NECO).

The Ellis Island Medal of Honor, established in 1986 by NECO, is presented to U.S. citizens who follow their passions, achieve their dreams and make the world a little brighter for all of us while continuing to preserve their rich ethnic heritage. Past medalists include six presidents, as well as Nobel Prize winners and leaders in business, government, sports, education and the arts.

Music has been a part of Mrs. Persson’s life since early childhood. At age 4 she was singing in chorus with her brothers and mother, accompanied by her father who played his violin. Her intention was to study music in college, but the muses opened a different door. She entered the University of Pennsylvania nursing program, graduated and became the head nurse of pediatrics at the University.

Soon again, the muses called! Mrs. Persson joined the U.S. Navy and rose to the rank of lieutenant commander. As a Navy nurse, her first duty in 1942 was a two-year assignment at Pearl Harbor. Later, while stationed in California, she auditioned for Kurt Herbert Adler at the San Francisco Opera, who cast her in a main-stage leading role opposite Lily Pons in Léo Delibes’ Lakmé.

Mrs. Persson has dedicated her life to preserving her rich Russian heritage, serving her country and inspiring others by her shining example of generosity to the community. Upon receiving the medal, Mrs. Persson said, “I look at my life and say, ‘How could all of these things have happened to me?’ I wish my parents were alive because they endured the trip from Europe with a 9-month-old baby, my brother, to come through Ellis Island in 1912 and begin life in America. I am truly blessed.”
A Message From Our CEO

The Kravis Center’s two decades-long mission to enhance the quality of life in Palm Beach County continues to evolve as we embark upon our 21st season. We have a great tradition of presenting a diverse schedule of national and international artists and companies of the highest quality. The most compelling legacy we can leave is to use this foundation to inspire and create the audiences of the future and to ensure one of Florida’s premier performing arts centers and exciting visitor destinations remains fiscally responsible, now and for the future.

Our commitment to audience development, artistic excellence and sound fiscal policy is and will continue to be the hallmark upon which we serve as a cultural and economic catalyst in this community. Over the past 20 years, the Center has enriched the lives of millions of residents and visitors to our world-class facility. They rely on us to be here to preserve and present today’s arts and artists, and to provide a safe harbor in which the artistic spirit and process can grow and find new meaning, new venues and new audiences. The Kravis Center is the bridge from the past to a future rich in the artistic excellence our community expects.

Your generous gifts of time, talent and money built our state-of-the-art complex. Your annual donations support a portion of our operating budget not covered by ticket sales or other earned income. A current or deferred gift to the endowment fund provides a vehicle for you to make a gift and support our programs forever.

As we approach year-end, we are pleased to offer timely gift planning options for you in this Person to Person newsletter. We encourage you to speak with your professional advisors or a member of our development staff to find out more about the benefits of including an endowment gift in your estate plan.

We appreciate your thoughtful consideration and continued support.

Judith A. Mitchell
Chief Executive Officer

Future Artists and Audiences

The following scenes are from the 2012 ArtsCamp show, Lights, Camera, Adventure, a project of 70 campers, teaching artists, interns and administrators. It is a testament to the diversity and talent of the Arts Education program at the Kravis Center. The ArtsCamp mission is to encourage the campers to think of themselves as artists—not just performers. The three-week summer session allows each student to experience every facet of theater life, including working with sets, lighting instruments, makeup and scenic design; creating costumes; writing scripts; acting; dancing and singing.
Planned giving has long been a method for philanthropic individuals to support their charities. However, in today’s environment, where investments, savings and assets are not earning as much as they have in the past, even successful, high-net-worth people are thinking twice about the amount of money they can commit to giving.

Life insurance has always been an excellent method for generating a sizable benefit for the charity without depleting the estate of the donor. By using a specialized asset-backed life insurance product that is linked to the positive performance of the S&P and negates the downside risks, a donor can purchase the insurance contract via a premium-financed program called LifeGift. LifeGift is a life insurance policy that is premium-financed by a financial institution so that the insured does not have to pay the premiums and, in most cases, will not have to provide collateral.

The premium-financed program will accept the cash surrender value in the policy as collateral on the premium-financing structure to fund the policy premium. If future results dictate a collateral requirement, the donor can always post a letter for credit for that balance without paying premium dollars. LifeGift provides a unique opportunity to make a substantial gift without affecting the estate and/or cash flow of the donor.

If you would like to learn more about the planned giving and endowment gift opportunities best suited to your family and philanthropic goals, we encourage you to consult your professional advisors or speak with a member of the Kravis Center development staff.

For further information about the LifeGift program, please contact Mark Edward Partners directly at 561-655-0557.

From time to time, we invite a local expert to share information designed to educate and alert our donors to timely planned giving techniques. Mark Edward Partners has offices located in Palm Beach and New York.
Growing up in the Canarsie neighborhood in Brooklyn, I was fortunate at a very early age to attend live performances of ballet and opera in New York City. The awe and splendor of those experiences are unforgettable memories that I wish for each child today to have as they grow up. I believe the performing arts are an important tool to teach children about themselves and the world around them.

Several years ago I began to volunteer at Wynnebrook Elementary School in West Palm Beach. One of the projects that has brought me great happiness was to find a way each year to give all the third-grade students the opportunity to enjoy the magic of the performing arts by attending a live ballet performance at the Kravis Center.

My original plan was to include the Kravis Center in my will to fund such a program. However, I was both impatient and fortunate to find an immediate way to accomplish my dream. Principal Mr. Jeffrey Pegg cooperated unbelievably with my plan. I chose to fund a charitable gift annuity through the Kravis Center, which provides current tax-favored income to me and provides me with the money to underwrite the cost of performance tickets for the students.

When the children and I attend the performance, I feel so blessed I can share my joy and love of ballet and my good fortune today with the future generation of artists and audiences.

If you are interested in learning more about the benefits of creating a gift annuity that benefits you and the Center, contact us at 561-651-4230.