NATIONAL PHILANTHROPY DAY

Honoring four who made a difference

The National Association of Fundraising Professionals celebrates its 20th anniversary and gives thanks to this year’s winners at a luncheon.

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Twenty years ago, Miami Vice bathed the city in a glow of fast cars and sleek living. The same year, a group was founding National Philanthropy Day to honor those molding Miami into a better place to live.

As the National Association of Fundraising Professionals celebrates its 20th anniversary, it will again recognize those people making a difference in Miami-Dade.

“We select people that give time or money to a variety of organizations so they touch the lives of many in different ways,” said John Capurso, chair of the National Philanthropy Day celebration.

The group gathers nominees from non-profit organizations, foundations and academic institutions. A committee chooses recipients in four categories. This year’s winners will be honored at a luncheon Tuesday in partnership with the Dade Community Foundation, the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce and the Planning Giving Council of Miami Dade.

This year’s award winners are:

- **Outstanding Philanthropist:** R. Kirk Landon has given nearly $20 million in donations to a variety of local organizations. Landon ended his tenure as CEO with American Bankers six years ago and now dedicates himself to philanthropy.

  Recently, Landon gave the largest cash gift from an individual donor, $5 million, to Florida International University’s College of Business Administration.

  While he headed American Bankers, he implemented a preschool for employees’ children and the company opened a public school at its corporate headquarters in 1987. He also gives generously to Miami Metzoo, local children’s museums and has chaired campaigns to raise money for children’s hospitals.

  “Everyone who applied fit the criteria but Kirk stood out because of his broad giving...”
and broad love of different areas of Miami," said Dena Willman, president of the Miami-Dade Chapter of the Association for Fundraising Professionals.

Adds Ruth Shack, president of the Dade Community Foundation: "He has the ability to see emerging needs in the community and be there with his dollars and his hard work."

• James W. McLamore Outstanding Volunteer Award: Willman calls Jay W. Jensen "a modest individual with a passion for life."

Jensen's contributions to Miami-Dade are far reaching. He shared his passion for the stage with a younger generation as a Miami-Dade schools drama teacher for 37 years, including 32 years as the drama director for Miami Beach High.

Jensen never earned more than $47,000 a year as a school teacher. Yet he amassed a small fortune by modest living and investing in the stock market.

A look at the local landscape will reveal his involvement: Jensen's name, and those of his parents, John W. and Thelma "Billie" Jensen, are on plaques in the lobby of the Jerry Herman Ring Theater, the pre-Columbian wing of the Lowe Art Museum in Coral Gables and the administrative offices of the University of Miami School of Education. (Jensen has given an estimated $3 million to the university, his alma mater.)

Jensen gives of his time, too, offering twice-weekly drama classes at the Hebrew Home for the Aged in Miami Beach and the Miami Beach Jewish Community Center.

• Julia Tuttle Award for Community Involvement and Corporate Citizenship: City Furniture's Keith Koenig.

What started out as Waterbed City in 1971 is one of Florida's fastest-growing furniture retailers. As the company grew, so did its largesse, as it set aside some of its earnings for charity.

What the Miami-Dade selection committee found most intriguing is the way that City Furniture donates. The company furnished the 47 units in Summerville Residences for Camillus House. The company also pledged to the capital campaign of Camillus House.

Separately, the company donated furniture to the Alonzo Mourning Youth Center in Overtown.

"They gave in a way that they could make a difference," notes Willman.