

Service and Faith

Foundation supports Catholic community and beyond

OF THE MYRIAD NONPROFIT organizations in San Diego, the Catholic Community Foundation may not be one that's immediately recognized by name. However, since its creation in December 2015, the foundation has relatively quietly raised a whopping \$60 million, supporting donor-directed charities locally and nationally.

"One of the key goals of the foundation is to create endowments to support every Catholic parish and school, vocation, and retired, disabled, and social service organization, like Father Joe's Villages and Catholic Charities," says Executive Director Gary Rectenwald. "The foundation is extensively Catholic but not exclusively Catholic. This means that, as a one stop resource to support any donor's philanthropy, financial gifts may be directed to a non-Catholic charitable organization so long as its mission and practice is not in conflict with Catholic values."

He lists organizations such as the YMCA, Boys & Girls Clubs, and Big Brothers Big Sisters among those not Catholic-based.

Rectenwald, a former tech professional whose resume lists giants including IBM and AT&T, came out of retirement to first take a position on the foundation's board of trustees and was then invited to become its first executive director. Though his background at first glance may seem distinctly divergent from nonprofit work, he sees more similarities than differences. "Both types of organizations must put their customers, or donors, first in order to be successful. Both organizations need dedicated employees and trusted relationships with customers or donors," he explains,

and then underscores, "The theme for both types of organizations is 'listen, listen, listen.'"

Much of his job is focused on identifying donors to contribute to the Foundation, enabling the organization to participate in specific projects as well as create endowment funds to ensure parishes are financially supported well into the future. Donors also

make specific requests for their donations, says Rectenwald. "Acting on their individual need to give, each donor identifies their personal short-term and long-term charitable support goals that are spiritual, meaningful, and purposeful to them. Their grant requests can be general but most are more granular and specific. For example, specifically supporting a new youth ministry program at their parish or through another organization."

One of the foundation's primary objectives for the future is to provide charities with the ability to apply for grants - something that must wait until the Catholic Community Foundation's invest-

ments mature to a place where they can be distributed. Of course, Rectenwald has his wish list projects as well, including a \$300-500 million tuition-assistance endowment fund for Catholic K-8 schools in San Diego and Imperial Valley. He was surprised to learn that nearly 42 percent of San Diego County residents are baptized Catholics, but many Catholic schools are closing. "It breaks my heart," he laments. Overall, ensuring continuity for his beloved faith is paramount to Rectenwald, within, ahem, some existing parameters. "I would like to work with parishes, schools, vocations, and social service ministries to ensure that this generation of Catholics creates new, permanent endowment funds to support their ministries forever (or until Jesus comes again)." *ccfsd.org* DEANNA MURPHY



Gary Rectenwald