

# OPINION

## Sun-Sentinel

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### EDITORIALS

## Give thanks for philanthropists, then vow to become one yourself

**T**oday's national giving of thanks will come in many ways — in silent reflection, in prayers, in toasts or in conversations around tables laden with holiday turkey.

People will say thanks for peace and prosperity, health and happiness, family and friends, as they should.

This year, why not expand the thank-you list to honor those local people whose unselfish acts of charitable giving help supply vital services to those in need and make South Florida a more humane and compassionate place to live?

The word philanthropist, according to Webster's Dictionary, defines someone who shows a desire to help mankind through generous, benevolent, humanitarian acts of charitable giving.

Beside that word they should print a picture of Lois B. Pope of Palm Beach, to symbolize the generosity and commitment to civic betterment of all South Florida philanthropists.

Three days before Thanksgiving, in an act of extraordinary unselfishness and generosity, she agreed to donate \$10 million to The Miami Project to Cure Paralysis. It is the largest recorded private gift for spinal cord research and one of the largest charitable donations ever made by anyone in South Florida.

Mrs. Pope is the widow of Generoso Pope, founder of the Lantana-based *National Enquirer* newspaper. She has a long record of personal involvement in and financial support for charitable causes.

The donation, to be paid out over five years, will provide an endowment to fund fellowships to attract 20 scientists to work at the University of Miami to continue pioneering work researching a cure for spinal cord paralysis.

It will help fund a planned new building called the Lois Pope LIFE Center, which UM officials believe will become an international center for spinal cord injury research.

LIFE stands for Leaders in Furthering Education, a charitable organization which Pope chairs. LIFE provides scholarships for young people who perform good works and donates funds to universities and special projects.

Pope ought to make everyone believers in what she calls "life links" — people, events and causes that link one person to another.

She said she was inspired to found the LIFE program by reading a 1992 *Sun-Sentinel* story about Boca Raton teen-ager Eric Perlyn's efforts to collect and then donate hundreds of pairs of shoes to needy children.

This year, LIFE is awarding 60 grants totaling \$400,000 to 20 students, their schools and the community organizations they serve.

Another "life link" that she said prompted her \$10 million donation was a meeting with actor Christopher Reeve, now paralyzed after a fall from a horse.

As Thanksgiving Day arrives, it is Pope's turn to become a "life link." Let her generous example inspire other South Floridians to follow her lead.

Great wealth is not a requirement for philanthropy. If you don't have \$10 million to give, how about \$1,000, \$100 or \$10? How about 10 hours of your time? Anyone can become a philanthropist by volunteering to work for or donate money to the cause of community betterment.

Contribute to your county's Community Foundation.

Help the United Way, which funds dozens of programs and agencies supplying social essential services to 1 in 3 local families.

Or volunteer time, money and energy to many other charitable causes, whether it is pounding nails to build a Habitat for Humanity home, delivering Meals on Wheels to an elderly shut-in or comforting an abused child or nursing home patient.

Philanthropy is a four-syllable, 12-letter mouthful of a word. In Plain English, it means "neighbor helping neighbor." Give thanks for philanthropists like Lois Pope today, then vow to become one yourself.