

Philanthropists of the Year: Thornburg, Oppenheimer

Award Kicks Off St. Vincent Gala

BY KATE MCGRAW
For the Journal

The couple who many consider represent the gold standard for community activism and charitable giving on Friday received Journal Santa Fe's Philanthropist of the Year Award for 2010.

Garrett Thornburg, CEO of Thornburg Investment Management, and his wife, Catherine Oppenheimer, accepted the award at a Coyote Cafe reception Friday, held in conjunction with the annual Glamour and Gauze Gala produced by the St. Vincent Hospital Foundation.

"This award recognizes many years of philanthropy in this community, and not just to the hospital," said Robert Glick, executive director of the foundation.

The award marks the beginning of a fundraising weekend for the foundation that serves Christus St. Vincent Regional Medical Center, Glick said. The hospital's annual gala tonight will raise money for the hospital's planned new Women's Breast Health Institute.

The choice of Oppenheimer and Thornburg for the award drew widespread praise for the couple. "He is unquestionably the most community-minded senior executive I've been associated with in 40 years in business," said David Miller of Thornburg Investment Management.

Miller heads the corporate giving arm of the company and said it follows Garrett



COURTESY PHOTO

Catherine Oppenheimer and Garrett Thornburg received the Journal Santa Fe's Philanthropist of the Year award Friday, kicking off a weekend of fundraising for Christus St. Vincent Hospital Foundation.

Thornburg's direction to involve employees in giving. He pointed to Thornburg's constant awareness of the smallest community needs.

"Garrett was a founding member of the Santa Fe Community Foundation, and one of the stories I know about him is that on the way to a meeting he saw a youngster shivering on a wintry sidewalk and walked into the meeting suggesting that the foundation set up a program to provide coats for children," Miller said. "He's very community-minded and puts that before success."

Deborah Chang, executive director of St. Elizabeth Shelter's programs, said Thornburg read a newspaper article about the shelter's Urgent Transition Center opening in December 2009 and arranged for financing — one-third of it

from his own foundation — to buy the building the program was renting. The program, which provides emergency housing and help in finding more permanent housing for single women and families, originally would have operated only for the winter months, she said.

Because St. E's was able to buy the building, it has been able to serve 149 single women and 38 families, including 66 children, since Dec. 1, 2009, she said.

What impressed Chang about Thornburg was that before he contacted her, he called officials at the Frost Foundation and persuaded them to make a \$105,000 donation, which he matched, to allow the shelter to buy the \$315,000 building.

"We pulled together another

\$25,000 in smaller donations and financed the rest," she said. "But the mortgage payments are lower than our rent was, so it was very doable. Garrett Thornburg was the one who made the connections to make this happen."

Thornburg's employees also give a sizable check to St. Elizabeth and to Esperanza Shelter for Battered Families each Christmas and in a "very low-key way" put on a Christmas party for children at both shelters, Chang said.

Miller said the corporation has provided charitable leadership since it began in 1982. TIM contributes to an educational program fund that benefits schoolchildren throughout the state, with the focus on poorer schools, he said. In Santa Fe the money is donated through the Partners in Education program.

TIM also gave about \$50,000 in PILT (payment in lieu of taxes) money to the city, which is funneling the funds to the school district, as a result of negotiations for a \$45 million industrial revenue bond, Miller said.

The firm also gives money to the Foundation for Financial Planning and the New Mexico Coalition for Financial Education. He said the corporate emphasis on community giving is one that Thornburg models for his employees. "He stresses that one needs to be appreciative of one's success," he said.

Miller said Thornburg "created an internal program called Dollar for Do-ers, in which any staffer who gives 40 hours a year as a volunteer or as a board member of a local

If you go

WHAT: Glamour & Gauze Gala, benefiting St. Vincent Hospital Foundation

WHEN: 6 p.m. today

WHERE: Eldorado Hotel, 114 W. San Francisco Street

HOW MUCH: \$250, includes dinner, dancing, comedy show, auctions

INFORMATION: Call 505-913-5209

nonprofit can ask for a \$1,000 check for that organization.

"A number of our managing directors got involved with Big Brothers/Big Sisters and became 'Big.' This year, we were one of the leading contributors to the Mayor's Ball for Big Brothers/Big Sisters," Miller said.

Oppenheimer was the founding artistic director and is a current board member of the National Dance Institute of New Mexico, which began as a 160-student program in Santa Fe in 1994. This year, NDI-NM is serving 6,200 children in Albuquerque, Santa Fe and Española, said executive director Russell Baker, and has a presence in 19 other schools with its residency program.

A current project to renovate the old Hiland Theater in Albuquerque will triple the number of children who can be served in the Duke City, he said.

"Her generosity of spirit, her intellect and her passion have created a nonprofit that brings together children, teachers and parents to create an organization that has

impacted the lives of so many New Mexico children," Baker said of Oppenheimer.

Oppenheimer also was one of the driving forces and is current chair behind the multiyear effort that culminated in New Mexico's first public high school for the arts this fall. The New Mexico School for the Arts, in the former St. Francis Elementary School in downtown Santa Fe, now serves 135 students, 20 of whom are boarding students living in a residence hall at the New Mexico School for the Deaf.

"Catherine Oppenheimer is a visionary in terms of improving the state that she calls home," NMSA Head of School James Ledyard said. "She has my respect for her work in bringing a group of people together to create this school."

"When she gets fixated on something that needs to happen, she draws other people around the idea — and she listens well," Ledyard added. "She's good at not only generating ideas but at releasing human potential."

The Thornburgs annually give millions of dollars through their family's Thornburg Charitable Foundation, Suzanne Barker Kalangis said. Kalangis, who is executive director of the family foundation, said Thornburg and Oppenheimer "definitely are teaching their own children that sense of responsibility toward the community that marks all great philanthropists."