

Author Margaret May Damen aims to inspire women to become philanthropists

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SPECIAL TO THE DAILY NEWS

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Margaret May Damen has a goal: As co-author of "Women, Wealth & Giving," she would like to see a copy of her newly published book in the hands of every woman and man who sits on a board of directors or is involved with donor organizations so they can see the vital role women play in the world of philanthropy.

Within its pages are insights about the philanthropic role women have enjoyed, suggestions about how to become a philanthropist, reasons to do so, and ways to see how best to use the "time, talents and treasures" women possess.

In other words, she and co-author Niki Nicasastro McCuiston have written a book that's easy-to-read and likely to inspire readers to action.

I recently spoke with Damen, of Lake Worth, about why she wrote the tome. "I believe it was a calling," she said, explaining that during one week in early 2006, three female icons from different generations died.

"That's when I felt the urgency to write this book because we are on the dark side of the mountain in making a difference in this world."

The women were playwright Wendy Wasserstein of *The Heidi Chronicles*; Coretta Scott King, wife of slain civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King; and Betty Freidan, author of *The Feminine Mystique* — each an example who encouraged and showed others the importance of leaving a positive life legacy.

Here's more from the interview:

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Q: After your name are an alphabet of letters, including CFP, CLU, ChFC and CDFA. Are you still involved in the financial arena as a broker or financial adviser now?

A: No. I literally sold my practice and gave up everything that had to do with commissions and fees in order to start The Institute for Women and Wealth. I call this my encore career, and as a result everything I've wanted to do all my life I'm doing now.

About brokering, I am a broker but not a broker in the financial sense. Now I'm a broker of what I call the energy of people's money. I broker where they want to put it to make a difference in the world. So I am the conduit to help them do that, and an inspirational and motivational speaker.

I also am a planned giving and endowment officer at the Kravis Center.

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Q: Why the focus on women?

A: Women naturally are the nurturers. But woman, whether they have inherited (their wealth), whether they earned it or married it now have the freedom of choice and can be responsible stewards. So the book gives

them confidence in how to manage their money if they don't have that and will help them to achieve whatever they aspire to with their precious time, talents and treasures. Especially the women of the '60s and the boom generation who suspended or put their dreams aside until the time was right and their families were raised.

Every woman has a legacy in the life she leads, the story she tells, and the values that she passes on. And every woman can and does make a difference. Women also either are in full control or influence 84 percent of the decision-making that goes on, from purchasing cars to health insurance and home mortgages.

A study in Harvard Business Review showed that the female economy is the largest economy on Earth. Larger than the GDP of Japan.

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Q: The book is well researched and combines facts with the popular concepts of spirituality, passion and empowerment. But at times, though, it was kind of "textbooky" and not for your everyday reader looking for a how-to book. And it's priced like a textbook at \$49.95.

A: It's not a textbook at all. It has more inspirational stories in it, along with those about how to change your world. It also has socio-economic information and things like the three principles of abundance. I show life stories of women from all walks of life that can make a difference, and I dismiss the myth that only the rich are philanthropists because true wealth is much more than money.

The publisher put that price on the book, but you can buy it at Amazon books for \$32.97.

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Q: How much money does it take to become a philanthropist?

A: One dollar.

You don't have to have money to be a philanthropist. Even if you buy Girl Scout cookies, you're a philanthropist because you have supported something that is greater than you.

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