

Dania Beck
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Greenville Hospital System has a well-documented recognition and stewardship plan. However, Dania quickly stated that stewardship of the top tier of donors falls outside the realm of those documented guidelines. “We don’t have anything standardized for major donor stewardship beyond the communication and recognition activities we do for all donors. Major donor activities are most often coordinated by the major gifts officer and the service line. You have to identify who you can depend on. Every service line is different.”

That said, however, certain norms have developed as a routine part of both the stewardship and cultivation plan. Major donors are often invited to Connection Point meetings, informal gatherings held in the homes of interested volunteers and donors who want to serve as advocates for philanthropy. Attendance typically leads to greater involvement as a Connection Point meeting host and additional giving.

Hospital tours are documented in the plan as a means of cultivating potential donors, however, they can also be used to keep donors engaged with the physicians and practitioners that most interest them. Personal notes sharing an accomplishment or inviting a donor to lunch are preferred over formal events. As Children’s Hospital Director of Development, Bill Kinard shared at the recent AHP conference, “I am not at the table for tomato sandwiches, but I help make it happen, and I’m the first person the Medical Director sees when they’re through.”

I questioned Dania about the differences between stewarding individuals, family foundations and corporations or corporate foundations. Her explanation was simple, but challenging to document or track: “Corporations and corporate foundations change leadership frequently, so you stay in cultivation mode with them. You’re constantly educating a new group of people. We treat family foundations like individuals, but we recognize and steward everyone connected to the foundation to some degree. We end up recognizing a whole list of people, but it’s worth it to maintain the relationships. We do heavy communications with all generations.”

Recently, GHS has established the Spirit of Philanthropy Award. Named after B.K. Bryan, a legendary philanthropist at the hospital, this award is granted when merited to those who exemplify his philanthropic spirit by giving of their time, treasure and talent. Top donors are invited to the dedication ceremony, which gives them an opportunity to gather with their peers.