



THE FAIRY GOODMOTHER

Naomi Eisenberg and the Good People Fund give money, time and mentorship to small nonprofits of good people doing good deeds



A Bounty for Sharing

Organization: AmpleHarvest.org

Founder and director: Gary Oppenheimer, 58

Created: March 2009, incorporated April 2010

Ah-ha moment: “I realized the combined problem of both hunger in the country and the challenge of too many gardeners growing excess food, which was going to waste.”

Mission: To enable the more than 40 million people who grow food in home gardens to be able to find a neighborhood food pantry where they can donate excess garden produce (which Oppenheimer estimates could be billions of pounds), using an easy search on AmpleHarvest.org.

How the Good People Fund helped: Funding early and ongoing incidentals and start-up costs to get the non-profit off the ground, offering guidance and mentorship. Has funded a free AmpleHarvest.org iPhone app and is funding one for the Android, currently in development, among other projects. “I can’t imagine Naomi touching anything that doesn’t touch the gold. That’s how she operates. This is not an impersonal foundation. It’s more like you’re being adopted by somebody and they’re going to give you college money, but you still have a home to go back to.”

Proud moment: Becoming a CNN Hero in April 2010.

Newest additions: A “gleaning” component on the Web site, in which home gardeners can search for a local gleaning organization, who will harvest the gardener’s excess produce for them free of charge so they can donate it. Also, gardeners will be able to print from the Web site an information sheet about their fruit or vegetable to include with their donation, so recipients know just what they’ve received.

Current standing: About 3,400 food pantries nationwide have registered with AmpleHarvest.org’s network. That’s about one-tenth of all U.S. food pantries. Oppenheimer’s goal is 10,000 pantries, or about one in three, in the network within three years.



WE LIVE IN AN AGE WHEN

nonprofits are more ubiquitous than Starbucks coffee shops, and the larger ones inundate mailboxes everywhere with pleas for money in exchange for some personalized return address labels. Considering the sheer number of “mega charities” out there, it can be hard to determine which are run by good people doing truly good things who put donated funds to work with minimal overhead.

Naomi Eisenberg, executive director of the Good People Fund, has a knack for sniffing out those gems that often go undetected by the larger population of donors with money to give.

Eisenberg, frequently called a fairy godmother (though *goodmother* might be more appropriate) by the directors of the grantee charities she supports, incorporated the Good People Fund as

a nonsectarian — but very Jewishly influenced — 501(c)(3) in January 2008. It was her intent to discover and support small nonprofits who are trying to do their bit toward *tikkun olam* and *tzedakah* with few resources, to guide and mentor those grantees and to educate others about the process and power of helping others.

“We look for grassroots,” says the New Jersey resident. “Our focus is good people. There are many wonderful small programs out there, but what differentiates us is that each program is started by an individual or small group of people who are responding to a need they have come across. Something in their life has brought them to start what they’ve started.”

In fact, it was prior experience volunteering, and then working, with a similar boutique nonprofit for about 16 years that inspired Eisenberg to establish the Good People Fund.

