



Jean Shafiroff

THE ART OF GIVING

by Joan Jedell

Jean Shafiroff, philanthropist, is actively involved as a volunteer leader of several New York City and Southampton charitable causes. Her managerial skills, compassion, generosity, and enthusiastic dedication are among her strongest traits. Her particular interests include charities related to women, healthcare, animals, and the people of the cities she calls home.

Jean's hands-on involvement with the multiple causes she supports is indisputable. She possesses a remarkable ability to connect different charitable groups with interested people and resources. Jean wears many hats as a board member, chairwoman, underwriter, and hostess of numerous charity events. In 2010 and 2011 she chaired the Southampton Hospital Annual Summer Gala, which raised \$1.7 million and \$2 million, respectively. Jean's board memberships include The New York Women's Foundation, JBFCS, French Heritage Society, The Couture Council, Lighthouse International Advisory Board, and Southampton Bath & Tennis Club Charitable Fund.

**“When you empower a woman, you empower a family.
When you empower a family, you empower a community.
And when you empower a community, you empower a nation.”**

During 2012, Jean is chairing or co-chairing a total of eight charity events, vice-chairing two others, and hosting and underwriting two large charity luncheons. Upcoming galas that she is set to chair include the Southampton Animal Shelter's Unconditional Love Gala on July 21, the 25th anniversary gala of The New York Women's Foundation on October 23, the French Heritage Society Gala Dinner Dance on November 14, and the Bicentennial Gala of the New York City Mission Society on December 12. This year she has already co-chaired galas for the Southampton Bath & Tennis Club Charitable Fund, JBFCS, American Cancer Society, and Solar One. In August, she will serve as a vice chair of the Southampton Hospital Gala, and in September, will serve as a vice chair of The Couture Council luncheon honoring Oscar de la Renta.

Jean is known for organizing and underwriting large luncheons in NYC to introduce individuals to different philanthropic causes. In September, she will host her fourth luncheon for The New York Women's Foundation, featuring board president Diana L. Taylor.

In tandem with her philanthropic responsibilities, Jean has also hosted events in Los Angeles—where, in January 2011, she held an event for Colin Firth just before he received his Hollywood Walk of Fame Star for *The King's Speech*, and in January 2012, a luncheon with The Weinstein Company for Michelle Williams and Kenneth Branagh for their film *My Week With Marilyn*.

Jean holds an MBA from Columbia Business School and a BS in physical therapy from Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons. She has worked both in public

finance and private partnerships on Wall Street. Prior to that, she was a physical therapist at St. Luke's Hospital in New York City. She is married to Martin Shafiroff, an investment advisor, and together they have two daughters, Jacqueline and Elizabeth, who share their mother's interest in charitable causes. They reside in New York City and Southampton.

Hampton Sheet: Where did your passion for philanthropy come from?

Jean Shafiroff: It began many years ago. I have always recognized the importance of helping others, but it was also reinforced through my travels and reading.

How do you choose the charities you work with?

First, I must believe in the cause. Second, I do extensive research on the charity, and third, I get involved slowly to make sure there's a good fit. I look for charities where I can make a difference.

What is your favorite event that you've chaired?

I loved working on the Southampton Hospital gala as chairwoman in 2010 and 2011; however, I've enjoyed working on them all.

How did you get involved with The New York Women's Foundation?

I was introduced to the foundation a number of years ago. I believe in the importance of supporting and empowering women. When you empower a woman, you empower a family. When you empower a family, you empower a community. And when you empower a community, you empower a nation.

Your daughters Jacqueline and Elizabeth share your devotion for giving back. How did you instill in them the same values? Does philanthropy play a big part in your family life, too?

Children learn by example. Jacqueline is in the master's program for social work at NYU and Elizabeth is very involved with animal rescue. And in many ways, I've learned from them.

Is your husband supportive of your charitable endeavors?

My husband recognizes the importance of it and is fully supportive. Also we share the same goals and interests. He's gotten used to putting on a tuxedo and accompanying me. He believes in my values, as they are his own.

You're chairing the Southampton Animal Shelter Gala on July 21. How did you get involved with the shelter?

My daughters influenced me, but I was asked. After doing research on the shelter, I accepted the position of chairwoman. The shelter is ranked among the top 10 in the US for animal care.

You obviously love animals. Do you have any?

In the family right now we have five rescue dogs, and they add a great deal to our lives.

Can you describe your work with the French Heritage Society? Do you identify strongly with French culture?

My maternal grandfather was French Canadian. FHS fosters good relations between the French

and American people. And I love the Society's scholarship program.

You've also worked with The Couture Council and FIT, and were featured on the Chic Index for your fierce fashion choices. Do you identify as a fashionista?

I love style. I've been collecting pieces that I love for years. I think fashion and style make a woman feel like a woman. And dressing up for the occasion lifts the attention to the cause.

Your clothes are amazing; who are your favorite designers?

Oscar de la Renta, whom The Couture Council will honor on September 5th, Carolina Herrera, Victor de Souza, Fabiola Arias, Nanette Lepore, and many others.

Have you ever had a clothing malfunction?

Zippers have broken. Buttons have fallen off. I always try to have a backup dress for a major event.

How do you find the time and energy to work so tirelessly on all that you do to bring funds and awareness to so many wonderful charitable causes?

I make the time, and it is a top priority in my life. When you believe in something, you always find the time.

It seems you're at almost every important charity event in the city and the Hamptons. What is it that drives you to attend these events?

It's important to support one another's causes, and we are all involved for the greater good of the community.

Do you ever get tired and just want to stay in, have a bowl of cereal for dinner, and kick off your shoes when you know you're expected at one of the big charity events?

Everyone needs downtime, but if I've committed to something, I attend.

What do you typically do with your downtime?

Stay home, order in, spend quiet time with my family and the dogs, and get on the computer. I never watch TV.

It's almost impossible to imagine, but does Jean Shafiroff ever walk around the house in a ratty old bathrobe and sweats?

I think you need to ask my husband for the answer.

What are some of your guilty pleasures or secret indulgences?

I enjoy the arts, ballet, film, opera, travel, and working out ... and I enjoy shopping and eating popcorn.

In the world of philanthropy, whom do you admire?

Brooke Astor ... and many others.

How do you see philanthropy in the future?

Philanthropy is part of our culture. There's no doubt that it is going to play an even more important role in the future of our country and the world. With government cutbacks, philanthropy has to assume a greater role.

What message do you want to give young people?

Always treat others with respect and kindness. Life is fleeting, and at the end of the day, it's not really what you've done for yourself, but what you've done for others that is most important. I'd like to think I've inspired others in even the smallest of ways. [HS]

