

FEATURES

JEAN SHAFIROFF



A LIFE BUILT AROUND GIVING: JEAN SHAFIROFF

By

Anyone who meets Jean Shafiroff is immediately struck by her warmth and generosity as well as her humble nature (and impeccable style). But beneath this elegant woman's stylish and self-effacing demeanor is a fierce devotion to numerous charitable organizations as one of New York City's and Southampton's leading philanthropists.

Those organizations to which she gives her time—which include New York Women's Foundation, New York City Mission Society, The Southampton Hospital and the Southampton Animal Shelter, to name only a few—are fortunate to have her in their corner. Indeed, no matter what the task, with Jean is behind it, the result is success: among her many achievements, she has helped to raise \$5.4 million for Southampton Hospital over a three-year period as chair of their gala. Jean's commitment and tireless efforts know no bounds: this is a woman who is not afraid to ask dozens of people if they will purchase a table for between \$10,000 to \$100,000 for a fundraising gala—and (successfully) take on the task of bringing in corporate sponsors to boot.

Beyond being an expert fundraiser, Jean also sits on numerous boards, acts as chair and co-chair for galas, hosts parties and sponsors lunches, and is an effective connector skilled at matching potential donors and honorees with a charity. It's no wonder that Jean is highly sought-after by many charities, and that those she has worked with have honored her numerous times.

Over the years, Jean has been the recipient of several awards and honors. In 2014, she received the Dina Merrill Award for Public Service at New York City Mission Society gala. She was also an Ellen Hermanson Foundation honoree in 2014, and a Surgeons of Hope honoree that same year. She also received the Madeleine Borg Lifetime Service Award and was honored at the Jewish Board Family and Children's Services' Annual Gala in 2013.

You would not expect a woman with so many honors and accolades under her (fashionable) belt to be so humble. But Jean keeps the spotlight firmly fixed on the causes she believes in and other individuals involved, rather than herself. Jean's humility is grounded in the belief that one of the greatest gifts is to be in a

position to give back to society. For Jean, giving is a joyful experience—one she hopes to share with others. As a philanthropist, she heeds what she feels is a universal call for all of us: to get out there to advocate and raise money for those who can't help themselves.

Jean's moral compass has always been pointed in the direction of helping others. Born and raised in Long Island, the value of giving back was instilled in Jean at a young age by her family and reinforced by her Catholic education. After moving to New York City and earning a Bachelor of Science in Physical Therapy from Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons and an MBA from the Columbia's Graduate School of Business, Jean worked as a Physical Therapist at New York's St. Luke's Hospital located in Manhattan's inner city. There, the stories of hardship from the people she worked with made a lasting impression. Her life took a turn to working on Wall Street, and later, starting a family with husband Martin D. Shafiroff and raising two daughters, Jacqueline and Elizabeth, but Jean always found time to give back. During her daughters' years at home, Jean held various volunteer roles at their schools and, after her children left for college, made a full commitment to a life in philanthropy.

For Jean, being a philanthropist is a full-time job. No matter the season, nearly 365 days a year, Jean is working in some way for a cause. On any given day, she could be attending a board meeting at one of the eight charities for which she is a board member; raising funds for a gala; connecting potential honorees to notable charities; or chairing or co-chairing an event that can take up to a year of preparation. Indeed, Jean juggles numerous responsibilities and doesn't eschew wearing many different "hats" on behalf of the charities she works for.

Beneath it all, Jean's hard work is fueled by passion for the causes close to her heart. These include working to advocate and raise money for underserved populations in New York City and Southampton; working for the humane treatment of animals, who can't speak for themselves; raising funds to ensure quality healthcare, and working for women's rights and welfare. Her principles have guided over 20 years of philanthropic work, includ-



ing her role as a board member for JBFC, New York Women's Foundation, New York City Mission Society, The Couture Council, The French Heritage Society, Lighthouse International, and as an honorary board member of the Southampton Animal Shelter. Additionally, Jean has worked in various capacities, chairing galas and fundraisers, for The Southampton Hospital Gala as auction chair and vice chair, and The American Cancer Society and Solar One, as well as working as board/co-chair for The Southampton Bath and Tennis Club Charitable Foundation. For six years, she has hosted a luncheon at Le Cirque to kick off the New York Women's Foundation gala. She regularly opens up her home in New York City as hostess, for events that include nights benefiting animal welfare and a cocktail reception for the French Heritage Society.

A believer in giving back to the places she loves, Jean devotes a significant portion of her time to causes in Southampton, working with the Southampton Bath and Tennis Club Charitable Foundation, Southampton Animal Shelter, and Southampton Hospital. Jean has hosted numerous events for Southampton Animal Shelter, a no kill shelter. The 2014 James Bond themed gala, honoring Georgina Bloomberg, was a tremendous success with over 300 guests in attendance. Well-known attendees included former mayor Michael Bloomberg as well as Southampton Mayor Mark Epley. In addition to the 2014 gala, Jean hosts an annual gala promoting the adoption of cats and dogs. Jean brings her love of animals home: she and her family have fostered many dogs and adopted two pit bulls from a shelter, Daisy and Bella.

For Jean, the focus is always on the charities she works with and she is an enthusiastic voice for their amazing work. For example, Jean fervently shares the story of the first time she visited the headquarters of The New York City Mission Society, the Minisink Townhouse, one hot summer day in August. There, she saw first-hand the benefits of the New York City Mission's wide variety of summer programs for underserved children, which included numerous classes in sports, music and geography. In a place like New York City, where 30% of children live at or below the poverty level, it was clear to Jean that New York City Mission is a force working to turn the tide. She left feeling elated by what she had seen—and determined to make a difference and dedicate herself to New York City Mission's cause. Since then, her contribution to the children of New York through New York City Mission has included co-chairing an event in East Hampton and

the Bicentennial Gala, as well as sitting on the Board of Directors, and she continually spreads the word about how valuable the organization is with others.

Another organization close to Jean's heart is the New York Women's Foundation, which seeks to empower women out of poverty. With the motto "women helping women," the Foundation offers educational and mentoring services for girls and also spearheads anti-violence campaigns, health and well-being programs for women, and economic justice. It is one of the top three women's funds in the world, and Jean is proud to sit on the Board.

As passionate as she is about the charities she gives to, Jean believes in supporting other people's causes and charities as well. She firmly states that giving should not be exclusionary or competitive. Rather, she is dedicated to helping the greater good, and making giving a collective experience by lending her own resources and time to other charities that others introduce her to. In cases where Jean knows she cannot personally give of her time, Jean makes valuable introductions, connecting organizations with individuals and potential honorees. An effective leader, her skills at the helm spring from an understanding that all team members have something to contribute, and she encourages and inspires others working to make an event a success, as well as volunteers and employees on the frontlines of the day-to-day work of a charity.

In all that she does, Jean makes her volunteer work top priority. Her passion for giving is fueled by a belief that every person is here on this earth to do his or her part to make things better, in some way, for another person and for the world at large. Through her impressive philanthropic work, Jean puts her beliefs into action with every passing day.

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