I learned early in my development career that volunteers are what make a good nonprofit organization great. After being at United Way of Story County for more than three years and witnessing firsthand the number of volunteers devoted to our organization, I know now that I underestimated the critical role community members serve in all organizations.

Volunteers are busy people: some are working full-time jobs, and some are retired and trying to figure out how they managed to find time to work. Despite having full schedules, they provide nonprofit organizations with hours and hours of unpaid labor. According to the Corporation for National and Community Service, 61.8 million individuals in the United States volunteer 8 billion hours of volunteerism annually. The economic value of all this volunteering translates into $162 billion. How many industries can say that?

The spirit of giving back is strong at Iowa State University, where volunteers serve as driving forces in a variety of capacities across the university. The act of volunteering in itself is powerful: It allows a person to be the change needed to help an individual, a community, or a nation overcome challenges and achieve success. While financial gifts are important and meaningful, the gift of your time and talents to an organization is a special opportunity to make a difference in a way that is meaningful to you.

This holiday season, I encourage each of you to seek out opportunities to volunteer in your own communities. As I can attest, your work is always needed, endlessly impactful and forever appreciated.

According to the Corporation for National and Community Service, 61.8 million individuals in the United States volunteer 8 billion hours annually. The economic value of all this volunteering translates into $162 billion.

Article by Jean Kresse, president and CEO of United Way of Story County, Iowa

Jean Kresse works daily to fulfill the organization’s vision of improving quality of life for individuals and families in the community. She believes that real progress toward a solution must include community partners and volunteers working collaboratively to address needs.
FEW HAVE HAD CAREERS in volunteerism as distinguished and fulfilling as Doris Riehm, class of 1942. To hear her tell the story, however, it all began very simply and without fanfare – with the chance discovery of a Boy Scout Handbook in the early 1930s.

Riehm was an enterprising 12-year-old: Upon finding the book, she quickly formed a troop with 10 schoolmates in her hometown of Lowden, Iowa. The girls followed the Boy Scout guidelines and hiked, sang, camped and earned badges all the way through high school, even creating a community library at the local fire department. “We loved it: planning, sharing, assuming responsibilities,” she said. “It was a great success.” These early volunteer experiences taught Riehm lessons about service, generosity and philanthropy that would continue to affect her actions far beyond childhood.

At Iowa State, Riehm studied child development, played the trombone in the band, and worked as an office assistant for Alvin Edgar, the beloved head of the department of music known for taking a genuine interest in his students. Riehm became close to the Edgar family, even babysitting for their daughter, who remains a dear friend. “Dr. Edgar seemed to inspire many of us to become our best – not only as musicians, but also in life in general,” she said.

When the Alvin Edgar Fund for Performing Arts was established, it felt natural for Riehm and her late husband, Jack, to contribute in honor of her mentor. “When we were in a position to give to Iowa State, we did so because of Dr. Edgar,” she said. “Over the years, whether it was medicine, education, music or something else, Jack and I were always really interested in helping people. It

DORIS RIEHM: A TROOPER THROUGH AND THROUGH

GET TO KNOW YOUR COMMITTEE: KATHRYN BETTIS

For Kathryn Bettis, a great experience as an Iowa State collegian has led to a lifelong passion for philanthropy.

Bettis was active in several organizations as an undergraduate, including Delta Delta Delta Sorority, which provided her an avenue to become heavily involved with on-campus philanthropy. It was even through a campus fundraiser that she met her husband, Lloyd, class of 1970, an Iowa State University Foundation governor. “Lloyd and I have always been involved in our community and civic affairs,” she said. “and we both had wonderful college experiences – giving back to Iowa State was a natural part of our lives.”

In addition to her service on the Women & Philanthropy committee, Bettis spends much of her time volunteering with Village Treasure House, an upscale, not-for-profit consignment boutique in her hometown of Glenview, Ill. Since 1998, the volunteer-staffed shop has distributed more than $1 million in grants to local agencies serving women and families in crisis – and Bettis has been there nearly from the beginning. “I have always felt that it is important to not just write a check for a cause,” she said in describing her philanthropic philosophy. “I want to give of my time as well.”

Bettis received a bachelor’s degree in elementary education from Iowa State in 1972, and a master’s degree in elementary education with a certificate of advanced study in language and literacy from National Louis University in 2007.
A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

This issue of the Women & Philanthropy newsletter highlights the importance of volunteerism. As someone who sees the value of giving your time in addition to your treasure on a daily basis, I am so awed by what can be accomplished by groups of people working together for a common goal – and the joy and happiness it brings to each of us as volunteers.

For example, a few summers ago as I was winding through downtown Des Moines to pick up my daughter Abbey from volunteering at the Science Center of Iowa’s summer camp, I couldn’t help but feel a little proud. Abbey decided to spend one entire week of her summer vacation helping kids learn about dinosaurs and outer space. While she didn’t solve world hunger or find a cure for a disease, that week she was doing what she could, volunteering her time and talents in a way that was meaningful to her and to the campers she served.

This experience reminded me that we can all find moments to give back to our community. Whether it’s donating clothing to those in need, serving meals together as a family, or supporting education at any level, all of these actions – no matter how small – do make a difference.

Today I encourage you to give back, get involved and learn more about the opportunities around you. As I’ve seen in my own children, volunteering not only grows character but also supports and encourages those in need.

One group of ladies that I personally enjoy spending time volunteering with are the members of the Women & Philanthropy committee, an experience that inspired the creation of the Riehm Family Foundation. “It is my hope that by educating those who attend the seminars, other women will be inspired to do the same after learning about the many rewards in philanthropy,” she said.

Through it all, Riehm has stayed involved with the Girl Scouts, serving in a host of volunteer leadership positions which include a term as chair of the board of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts – a role only six Americans have held since the board’s inception in 1928.

What’s next for Riehm? At 93, she stays active in her Tucson, Ariz., community, and is passionate about her continuing work with her favorite organizations, something she encourages everyone to make time for.

“Volunteering has allowed me to get involved with other people’s interests, see needs to be met both locally and worldwide, and to come together with others to make things happen,” she said. “The feeling you get when helping someone in need is what makes life worthwhile.”

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY FOUNDATION
WOMEN & PHILANTHROPY COMMITTEE

FRONT ROW (LEFT TO RIGHT)
Kathryn Bettis | Glenview, Ill.
Becky Kresowik | Iowa City, Iowa
Lora Talbot | Belmond, Iowa

BACK ROW (LEFT TO RIGHT)
Chris Cornelius | Bellevue, Iowa
Kristi Knous, Chair | Urbandale, Iowa
Tammy Stein | Muscatine, Iowa
Susan Streit | Cedar Rapids, Iowa
Dee Vandeveerter | Cedar Falls, Iowa
Cyndie Jeffrey | Ames, Iowa

Kristi Knous ‘90
Chair, Women & Philanthropy committee
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women & philanthropy

Upcoming Dates

March 2014
- Florida regional event

April 2014
- Des Moines regional event

August 2014
- Minnesota regional event

Fall 2014
- Northern California regional event
- Women & Philanthropy workshop