

**SPOTLIGHT**

**Luncheon is Nov. 8.**

The 15th annual National Philanthropy Day luncheon will honor 10 individuals and organizations for their accomplishments on Nov. 8 at the Renaissance Denver Hotel.

For more information about the luncheon, call Metro Volunteers at 303-561-2300.

Those to be honored include:

**Outstanding Volunteer Fundraiser:** Robert L. Cohen, IMA Inc., Denver.

**Outstanding Philanthropist:** Merle Catherine Chambers, president/CEO, Leith Ventures LLC, Denver.

**Outstanding Philanthropic Organization:** Scottish Rite Foundation of Colorado, Dwight A. Hamilton, president, Denver.

**Outstanding Youth Group:** Lewis-Palmer High School Serteen Club, teen service organization, Longmont.

**Outstanding Youth:** Tim Brungardt, Wheat Ridge, sophomore at Regis University.

**Outstanding Professional in Philanthropy:** Joni Baird, vice president-community relations, US Bank, Denver.

**Outstanding Volunteer:** Ed George, consumer advocate, Mental Health Association of Colorado.

**Outstanding Foundation:** The Colorado Trust, John R. Moran Jr., president, Denver.

**Outstanding Large Business or Corporation:** Agilent Technologies, Colorado Springs.

**Outstanding Small Business:** Rangely office of Chevron Texaco Production, Rangely.

More information: 303-992-3882 or www.npdcolorado.org.

# Outstanding

## Baird, Chambers and Scottish Rite to be feted

BY LYN BERRY-HEMLINGER  
DENVER BUSINESS JOURNAL

Three honorees at Colorado's upcoming 15th annual National Philanthropy Day awards ceremony credit the principles of business for their success.

That's because the winners — including Joni Baird, Outstanding Professional in Philanthropy; the Scottish Rite Foundation of Colorado, Outstanding Philanthropic Organization; and Merle Catherine Chambers, Outstanding Philanthropist — approach their philanthropic efforts from a business-minded perspective.

"I'm applying the social responsibility piece to business and helping them grow the bottom line through these activities," said Baird, who is vice president, community relations for US Bank. Previously, she handled community relations for Johns Manville, which won awards for its work in the community.

"When companies do the right things in the community, it helps create new business for the organization — and employees are happier because people like to work for corporations that are good citizens," she said.

Baird's activities at US Bank include stewarding volunteer and financial support for the community programs it sponsors. The most successful of the programs is a seminar series that Baird created last year for nonprofits and their boards, which drew some 650 participants at its last gathering.

"This series was born of the frustration I felt



Joni Baird, vice president of community relations at US Bank, and Ed George, consumer advocate at the Mental Health Association of Colorado, will be honored for their outstanding efforts in philanthropy at a luncheon Nov. 8 at the Renaissance Denver Hotel.



KATHLEEN LAVINE | BUSINESS JOURNAL

SEE HONORED, A42

## Cohen, George and Colorado Trust receive honors

BY JULIE DUNN  
SPECIAL TO THE BUSINESS JOURNAL

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the definition of philanthropy is: an active effort to promote human welfare.

Three of the winners of this year's National Philanthropy Day in Colorado, a nationwide event that recognizes those who invest their skills and financial resources toward improving their community, definitely fit the bill.

After relocating 11 times in nine years, Robert L. Cohen moved to Colorado in 1988 determined to make Denver his home. While establishing Insurance Management Associates, a financial services company, Cohen knew that he also needed to give something back to the community.

"I had realized that there are several levels of success, and the piece that was missing for me was a place that I called home and a community that I was involved in," he said.

Cohen now serves on the boards of the Community College of Denver, the Colorado I Have A Dream Foundation, Junior Achievement, Metro State College of Denver, The Spot, Adventures Within and several other organizations.

"I love kids; they are definitely where I focus my efforts," explained Cohen, who has four children of his own. "I feel very passionate

**'I love kids; they are definitely where I focus my efforts. I feel very passionate about them being our future; a little bit of effort can go such a long way.'**

Robert L. Cohen  
Outstanding Volunteer Fundraiser

about them being our future; a little bit of effort can go such a long way."

Cohen, who was named Outstanding Volunteer Fundraiser, has raised more than \$2.5 million for Colorado charities.

"He is one of our star fundraisers," said Kyle Kenyon, development director at the Colorado I Have A Dream Foundation. "He is also a class sponsor, which means that he has agreed to adopt a class of third-graders and guide them all the way through high school. It's a huge commitment; he's just a dynamo."

"I do it because I love and care about this community," said Cohen. "Denver is special. If you want to get involved, you really can make

a difference."

But he doesn't need to explain that to Ed George, a consumer advocate for people with mental illness who currently volunteers with the Mental Health Association of Colorado and was named Outstanding Volunteer. "I came here one day and they never told me to go home," laughed George, who suffers from depression and a personality disorder. "Getting out and about, that is what saves me. This place is home to me, they're my family."

George, 43, has also worked with the Legal Center for Persons with Disabilities, the governor's Mental Health Planning and Advisory Council, the Colorado Developmental Disabilities Planning Council and the Colorado Alliance for the Mentally Ill. "It's a subject that is near and dear to my heart," George said.

"Ed has worked so hard and done so much for us, he's really willing to take on any job, from administrative duties to huge bulk mailings," said Jill Norris, community services coordinator at the Mental Health Association. "He gets involved with legislative issues and he works to ensure equal rights for people suffering from mental illness. He is a true advocate for the mental health community."

George, a former bike messenger who lives in Denver, also champions "people first lan-



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## HONORED: Foundation aids speech therapy

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when I had to decline [funding] requests," she said. "I thought, 'What can I do to help all nonprofits — so that even if I'm unable to get funding, I can give them something?'"

To address this need, Baird forged a partnership with groups such as Metro Volunteers, Community Resource Center, the Better Business Bureau, the Association of Fundraising Professionals, Planned Giving Roundtable and the Governor's Commission on Community Service to fund the series.

Another incarnation of this seminar will take place on Nov. 19, when chief economist Tucker Hart Adams presents a 2003 economic outlook specifically designed for nonprofits and foundations.

According to Barbara Volpe, president of the Public Education & Business Coalition, Baird's work on the seminar is a perfect example of her ability to make connections in the community — be it between nonprofits and corporations, nonprofits and other nonprofits, or volunteers and the causes that seek them.

"Joni uses philanthropy to connect the dots that form our community," Volpe said.

The Scottish Rite Foundation also has made a name for itself by nurturing important business partnerships.

The organization, which has helped more than 12,000 children in Colorado with language disorders since its founding in 1953, maintains strong partnerships with a network of other nonprofits and hospitals — such as The Children's Hospital in Denver.

"For almost 50 years, the Scottish Rite Foundation of Colorado has improved the lives of children and families and enhanced the health of communities in our state," said Children's Hospital spokeswoman Deborah Hayes, noting that the foundation has pledged \$2 million to the hospital to establish an endowed chair in childhood language disorders by the end of the year.

Since its inception, the foundation has contributed more than \$14 million for therapy services and \$500,000 for equipment, materials and supplies used in the therapy. This year, it will contribute more than \$1.6 million to programs in the state that sustain language therapy services. Its endowment has grown to about \$20 million.

The foundation's services are now available to about 80 percent of Colorado's children. It is estimated that 10 percent of all children are at risk for language disorders.

According to foundation president Dwight Hamilton, the organization's mission has spread to Scottish Rite Masons in nearly every state in the nation, for a total of 194 clinics nationwide.

"It's just developed into a major national charitable organization and work — and it all started here," he said.

For Chambers, a business background in the oil and gas industry taught her to endure risk and plan ahead.

"I had to think, always, about the long-term implications of my actions," said Chambers, who managed Axem Resources Inc. for more than 16 years.

When she created Chambers Family Fund in 1997 — to provide philanthropic support for the early care and education of children, girls' futures, women's economic self-sufficiency and the support of democratic values — these business lessons led her to implement a couple of unique donation strategies.

One is the willingness to invest in policy

change or the improvement of a system, such as funding the Colorado Children's Campaign, which lobbies for children's issues.

"I don't get the immediate feedback that I get when I direct my efforts to direct service organizations," Chambers said. "But I feel that I'm helping people directly and helping a whole stream of people who follow. Hopefully, systemic funding will help generations not yet born."

Chambers Family Fund also supports programs that educate women and help

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**Merle Catherine Chambers**  
Outstanding Philanthropist

them become economically self sufficient.

One such program under way is the formation of The Merle Catherine Chambers Center for the Advancement of Women, which will provide resources to support the advancement of women and families through avenues such as workforce development, technology education and educational achievement.

Located on the University of Denver campus, the new center will house the Women's Foundation of Colorado and DU's Women's College. It is scheduled to open next year.

"[Merle's] been an unwavering supporter of women's and girls' issues," said Marla Williams, president of the Women's Foundation. "I can't think of anyone's name I'd rather have on that building."

Another long-term approach to funding is Chamber's commitment to recurring support, without application, for organizations that use their resources wisely.

"Once we've found an organization to invest in that works effectively with the resources we provide, our continued support increases what that organization can accomplish exponentially," Chambers said, adding that these funds often go to projects, programs and initiatives that don't receive as much funding — or are issued at a time of year when cash flow is tight.

Chambers Family Fund makes grants of approximately \$2 million a year to dozens of Colorado organizations. The foundation's endowment stands at a little more than \$41 million.

Chambers, who has dedicated her time and resources to improving the lives of women and families in Colorado for nearly three decades, encourages other women to support programs and projects that benefit women and girls.

"We need to be as serious and as strategic about the economics of our giving as we are about our own careers," she said.

### DETAILS

**Event:** 15th Annual National Philanthropy Luncheon.  
**Place:** Renaissance Denver Hotel.  
**Date:** Nov. 8  
**More information:** 303-561-2300 or www.npd-colorado.org.

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