



# IGNITING THE SPARK: Examples of Next Gen Engagement Strategies

Prepared by the National Center for Family Philanthropy & Youth Philanthropy Connect, a program of The Frieda C. Fox Family Foundation

## THE LAWRENCE WELK FAMILY FOUNDATION

LOCATED: Los Angeles, California (family geographically dispersed)

MISSION STATEMENT: We award grants to nonprofit organizations serving children and families living in poverty in three Southern Californian neighborhoods. Specifically we look for grassroots organizations that demonstrate a long term commitment to the families they serve. In addition a small portion of our funding goes to nonprofits promoting youth and family philanthropy.

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## The Lawrence Welk Family Foundation

### Who Is Involved:

- 42 Family members from the 2nd, 3rd and 4th generations. Twenty family members make up the 4th generation and range in age from 8 to 23.
- 90% participation of eligible family members.
- Supported by family member President and Executive Director

### History of Youth Engagement:

The Lawrence Welk Family Foundation was formed in 1960 by musician and entertainer Lawrence Welk. His daughter, Shirley Fredricks, became the foundation's president in 1980, and quickly established one of the nation's first next generation boards in 1983 for the third generation who were ages 12–24. The youth participated at full board meetings and were given 10% of the board budget for their own grantmaking during their meeting that followed the board meeting. They would bring in organizations outside the normal grant guidelines that were relevant to the day. All decision-making was consensus based.

In the mid 90s all the junior board members were invited to join the full board and in 1997, Shirley stepped aside to allow one of the next generation board members to assume leadership. Today the Board operates with 9 board seats and directors serve three year terms. As the third generation started having children, the kids were engaged in site visits and other activities that motivated the youth individually towards giving. During the annual family



reunion, “Cuzapalooza”, started in 2000, they expose youth (ages 4+) to issues and fun, hands-on service and fundraising activities. For example, one year they sold Krispy Krème donuts to golfers to raise money for an air conditioning unit for a therapeutic preschool. They ended up raising enough money for two. They have also done beach clean ups, made dolls for children in refugee camps, built a well through Charity:Water and more.

In 2008, the Foundation re-established the Junior Board for a new generation of potential family philanthropists, age 7+. The kids have \$3-5,000 to grant and meet without the adults, cousin as a facilitator. At their first meeting the 4th generation junior board decided to focus on causes that serve children in life-threatening situations globally. Their first grant of \$1000 to the Cambodian Children’s Fund provided roofs for 42 families during the rainy season, 20 pounds of rice and new water tanks.



When they saw how much of an impact they could make, they were hooked.

Today the oldest of the 4th generation are young adults. At the age of 18 they serve two years on the foundation board as non-voting members at which point they become eligible for full board service.

### Current Youth Engagement Strategies:

- Cuzapalooza Family Reunion gathering where youth participate in service, fundraising and grantmaking activities together and with other generations. A grant is given to any organization they visit.
- Junior Board meets during Cuzapalooza to present grant nominations to each other. The G4 discuss the merits and drawbacks of the organizations they are considering, facilitate their own meeting to come to consensus on the number and amount of grants awarded.
- The foundation matches G4 members’ volunteer time and contributions to nonprofits they care about.





## Adult Perspective:

*“It is incredibly moving to see the kids become passionate about something they are engaging in, especially with one another and across family lines. We have tried to be relevant and nimble to respond to these passions. It is encouraging how young you can start to develop philanthropic interests and skills!”*

—Lisa Parker, President and Executive Director

## Next Gen Perspectives:

*“I like it when we go places instead of just choosing where to give money. It’s great even for the little kids. I liked going to the wild animal park and learning about their conservation projects and it was fun for all of us to plant a garden at Olivewood. I like the way we do it because it’s fun so it makes us want to be involved.”*

—Gillian Parker G4

## Advice to Others:

1. Start with the end in mind. In our case this means raising the next generation to be savvy grantmakers and to discover the gifts and skill sets they each bring to the foundation. We also wanted them to form bonds with each other and to discover their own personal philanthropic passions. The Cuzapalooza activities are built around these goals
2. Make experiences relevant. For example, when a family member was adopted from China we were able to learn about a nonprofit raising funds for children in Chinese orphanages who need to undergo cleft palate surgery in order to make them more “adoptable.” This was our way of honoring the new family members.
3. Start as early as possible, ideally before they are teens. The sweet spot is from ages 7–12. Once they have been “hooked” by a positive giving experience as children they are more likely to be philanthropic later.



## Resources to Share:

- Cuzapalooza process documents
- Board eligibility criteria
- Links to interviews and articles on the NCFP website