



## *Fundraising During Uncertain Economic Times*

*The following statement resulted from a recent discussion among Consulting Associates at Phillips & Associates which focused on clients' expressed concerns about our nation's current "economic environment".*

Uncertainty over our nation's economic underpinnings coupled with wide swings in financial markets has set off a wave of psychological and financial angst, which can negatively impact fundraising efforts as well as expectations. Given these circumstances, our clients are facing another challenging time in philanthropy; the fifth major economic downturn since our firm began serving the not-for-profit sector 37 years ago.

What to advise our clients? I discovered long ago that people who use crystal balls to predict the future eventually wind-up picking glass out of their teeth! So let's not spend time trying to predict the timing of an economic recovery to invigorate philanthropy. This is a time to apply renewed enthusiasm, along with an ample dose of realistic funding expectations, to fundraising plans and efforts. This is not a time to back away from communicating personally and persuasively with donor constituencies; to infer that funding needs are no longer urgent; to be unprepared when economic factors improve, as they inevitably do.

Let's counsel clients that now is an excellent time, while maintaining fundraising initiatives with realistic expectations, to focus attention on those essential fundraising management areas which might have been overlooked during the previous record setting years of fundraising. To prepare for the next resurgence in our nation's philanthropy. To address:

- **Developing fundraising leadership** in both expectations and action, from governing boards as well as professional staff.
- **Defining compelling needs** underscoring the merit for funding which donors will expect in even greater and persuasive detail than in the past.
- **Seeking endowment gifts** with emphasis on estate planned gifts from potential donors ages 70 years and above given national estimates that trillions of dollars in "wealth transfers" will be made over the next 10 to 15 years.
- **Emphasizing donor stewardship** through meaningful and disciplined plans for assuring donors of the value and impact of their prior and continuing support.

Within each of these fundraising management areas our firm has developed over the past 37 years the professional skills, objectivity and insights to assist our clients in preparing for the future of their fundraising success.