

## An adventurous approach to philanthropy

Are you seeking a novel way to get your next-generation members engaged in philanthropy? Maryann Fernandez, a consultant with a background in the wealth management and philanthropic arenas, offers services designed to bring fun and adventure to philanthropic efforts—and, she says, to get people “out of the boardroom and into the field.”

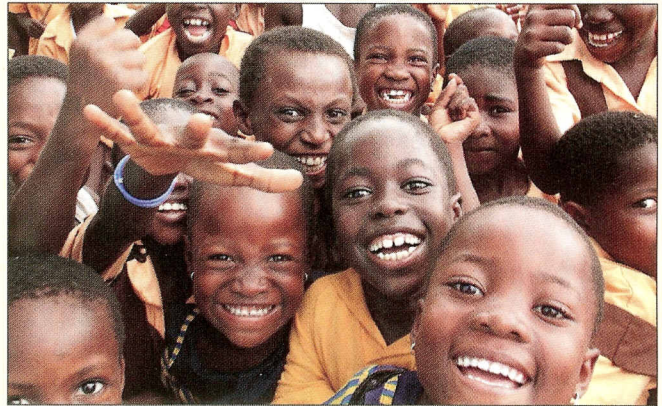
Her firm, Philanthropy Indaba ([www.philanthropyindaba.com](http://www.philanthropyindaba.com))—the name is a Zulu word meaning “a meeting of people from different tribes”—offers travel opportunities for high-net-worth family members seeking hands-on engagement and an in-depth exploration of the world’s most critical issues. Philanthropy Indaba provides services to a variety of families and individuals but is particularly focused on the next generation.

Fernandez, formerly vice president of family education services and senior marketing representative at Harris Private Bank in Chicago, founded Philanthropy Indaba in 2009 to help donors “sharpen the focus of their philanthropy, and strengthen the impact of their engagement.”

At press time, Philanthropy Indaba had scheduled a two-week trip to Ghana for a small group of next-generation members from ages 16 to 22. The travelers planned to make a documentary that captured the stories of Ghanaian citizens as well as the filmmakers’ own experiences and impressions. (Citing security concerns, Fernandez declined to specify the dates of the trip or identify participants.) A professional field producer/camera operator would accompany the group, but the hands-on work was to be spearheaded by the participants.

The documentary film project aimed to offer the young travelers experience in working as a team and researching the three areas to be explored in the film (the tragedy of human trafficking, the impact of mobile technology in the area and the development of innovative business initiatives, such as a fair trade cocoa cooperative). Fernandez says the hands-on filmmaking project would enable participants to immerse themselves in issues such as poverty and women’s empowerment and, at the same time, help the budding philanthropists to discover their passions and find their own voice.

“I wanted to make sure [the trip] wasn’t just a tour,” explains Fernandez. “I really wanted [participants] to be focused, and I wanted them to be seeking answers.”



Schoolchildren in Ghana.



Maryann Fernandez feeds a baby black rhino in Kenya.

Philanthropy Indaba can also develop a service or internship opportunity that’s targeted to a client’s interest, plan a philanthropic family vacation or design custom philanthropic coaching programs. It offers local, national and international travel experiences, all of which can be customized to meet a family’s needs. Fernandez says her organization “quarterbacks” the travel logistics as well as the educational and philanthropic aspects of a trip and offers access to the key people working in the field to achieve social change.

Fernandez co-founded Shaking the Tree Interactive Productions, which uses storytelling to address challenges in affluent families. She has also provided consulting services to non-profit groups and helped launch a private network of ultra-affluent philanthropists.

“What I envision,” she says, “is bringing people with different perspectives, different skill sets and different resources together to address [social-change] issues. People have been siloed up for too long.”