Advancing Eisenhower through Philanthropy and Annual Giving

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Frank Gaeta, Co-Chair
Eisenhower Annual Associates Fund

Joaquin Delgado, Co-Chair
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What could be more perfect than life in the desert? While we desert types have come to know and appreciate the beauty of this oasis we call home, it wasn't long ago that the Coachella Valley's resort-oriented cities were agricultural fields or private enclaves of the rich and famous.

Today, the Coachella Valley is a thriving series of nine communities and several unincorporated areas, stretching across 790 square miles of the desert floor. Individuals from neighboring counties as well as the other 49 states and many countries flock here for work, rest and rejuvenation in increasing numbers. Growing at a rate of 53 new residents per day, more than 40 percent of the valley's population now lives here year round.

Along with this influx of new residents and visitors, comes the need for a solid infrastructure of schools, businesses and health care facilities. That's where Eisenhower Medical Center comes in. Healthy Living recently spoke with Frank Gaeta and Joaquin Delgado who will again serve as Co-Chairs of our Eisenhower Annual Associates Fund, the annual appeal for funding that supports the ongoing programs and services of the medical center.

Both Frank and Joaquin are longtime residents. Frank retired here some 25 years ago from Kansas City, Missouri. Joaquin's family, the original owners of the Las Casuelas Mexican restaurants, settled here in 1958 when Joaquin was just a young boy. Both agree that healthy living equates to a lifestyle, and Eisenhower Medical Center offers us all an opportunity to stay healthy and live long lives. How? The dedication of the hospital's administration and Board of Directors ensures that the hospital retains a quality medical staff, hires experienced personnel, provides superior educational programs, and acquires only the most state-of-the-art equipment. As Joaquin says, "It is a wonderful campus of health." "I think what motivates me is my philosophy that we all have a purpose here and that purpose is to serve."- Frank Gaeta

"Last year," Frank notes, "Eisenhower was honored as one of the 100 Top Hospitals in the country. It didn't receive this honor by doing nothing," he continues. "That happened because of good leadership, hard work, and generous donors who believe in Eisenhower's commitment to service."

Without good health care, communities suffer. Both Joaquin and Frank agree that Eisenhower has successfully generated a positive image to the public, becoming the number one choice of valley residents when they require health care services. The improvements that are underway on the main campus likewise elevate Eisenhower's reputation. Frank shared that many of his friends, knowing of his involvement with the Foundation, often inquire about "what's new" at the hospital.When he shares with them, he points out that this hospital responds to the needs of its communities with current projects like the Emergency Department renovation and expansion, or the construction of the Annenberg Pavilion that will provide 160 beds. "I'm pleased at their genuine interest," Frank says. And that translates into their involvement and philanthropic support.

Involvement, it has long been said, is the real key to fundraising success. Both Frank and Joaquin admit that they were each introduced to the Foundation by other people — people who encouraged them to use their talents, contacts, time and personal donations to help this fine institution mature. "I think what motivates me," shares Frank, "is my philosophy that we all have a purpose here and that purpose is to serve." Frank believes that health care is an especially important area to support with charitable contributions. "There is a real need out there.When donors can see how their money is helping to solve issues like physician and nurse shortages, it makes them realize the necessity of sustaining an organization like Eisenhower so it will be there for them, their children, and their grandchildren." "I think people like to be a part of a winning team. They see Eisenhower as being successful and having a good reputation." - Joaquin Delgado

Joaquin echoes Frank's sentiments adding, "I think people like to be a part of a winning team. They see Eisenhower as being successful and having a good reputation. By donating, they feel they have been part of the hospital's overall success."

Last year's annual appeal focused on physician recruitment, an area of high priority. There are not enough primary care doctors for the valley, and even some specialties require additional medical staff to effectively handle the high patient volumes. As Frank points out, "It has become increasingly difficult to get in to see a doctor at any time, but during season, it's much worse."

It's important to know that recruitment of physicians comes with a high price tag.While a major recruitment tool is the excellent facilities Eisenhower can offer potential physicians, there are many other variables that factor into the decision making process such as housing issues, schools for their children, work opportunities for a spouse, not to mention the hard work and long hours involved in building a practice in an entirely new area. Thus far, the Eisenhower Annual Associates Fund has raised $1.7 million for our medical staff recruitment efforts.

Joaquin and Frank agree that a contributing factor to our valley's large population of philanthropic individuals is the centralization of the area. "We are a very confined area," Frank explains,"with our services centralized and conveniently available to us. People with high incomes and a financial capacity to give back to their communities are gravitating to sunbelt areas such as our valley, especially as they age." Good weather, country club living, outdoor sports and services that compare to any major metropolitan area make for a winning combination.

So what will next season bring? Frank and Joaquin are optimistic that their continuing efforts to request support from individuals, as well as area businesses, will be fruitful in raising additional monies for physician and nurse recruitment. Both men agree that this initiative stays at the top of our annual appeal because we have yet to catch up with the high demand of our services in an expanding valley that shows no signs of slowing down.

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