

Barbara Kaufman's passion for education fuels her work with the CV Symphony

Winston Gieseke

Palm Springs Desert Sun
USA TODAY NETWORK

A few years ago, long-time Rancho Mirage resident **Barbara Kaufman, Ph.D.**, an educator and consultant to universities, decided she wanted to get more involved in the Coachella Valley. Having traveled so much for her job, she yearned to give back closer to home, so she joined a women's organization at **Eisenhower Health** called the **Circle of Stars**. The group helped the hospital purchase new state-of-the-art equipment for the physicians. She and her husband, **Erv**, also became Eisenhower donors.

Giving back is nothing new for Kaufman. For the past 25 years, she has worked with **Leadership California**, an organization that educates women about issues and trends affecting California and how they can make a difference.

But it's her work with **The Coachella Valley Symphony (CVS)** that really touches her heart as well as her passion for education. And it all began with a trip to the doctor's office.

"When I first met **Dr. Lisa Lindley**, my physician, I was impressed with the time she gave back to her community despite her hectic schedule," Kaufman says. "One such role is serving as CEO for the Coachella Valley Symphony board."

Knowing of Kaufman's love of education, Lindley asked her patient if she would consider joining the board. "I said, 'Gee, I don't have a background in music,'" Kaufman recalls. "And she said, 'No, that's not why I want you on the board.'"

According to its website, the mission of the Coachella Valley Symphony is "to perpetuate live symphony music and to provide public performance venues for both accomplished youth and adult musicians, to provide symphonic music education to young emerging musicians and to support diversity among individuals and within music presentations."

The program starts with children in elementary school and continues into early adulthood. "I was particularly impressed with the unique mentoring pro-



Barbara Kaufman's first contribution to the Coachella Valley Symphony board was to help fund the organization's instrument lending program. PROVIDED

gram the Coachella Valley Symphony offers, as well as scholarships, to students of diverse backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses," Kaufman says.

After speaking with the doctor about what she might be able to contribute in terms of governance and fundraising, Kaufman attended several community concerts and observed the excitement of the students who shared the stage with adult musicians. She also witnessed first-hand the passion and transformative impact their music education had on them. "That experience led to wanting to learn more about the symphony's educational mission," she says.

Kaufman accepted Lindley's invitation to join the CVS board. Her first con-

tribution was to help fund the organization's instrument lending program, which is a critical success factor for students who cannot afford their own instruments.

It didn't take long for Kaufman to find herself impressed with the organization, especially its leaders. "This is very much a working board," she says. "It isn't just a 'write-a-check' board. It's a very small group of musicians and others who care about the symphony, care about music and care about these kids. It's a board that really is fully engaged in many areas, far more than I am because I don't have the music background. But very, very engaged in the programming, very engaged in listening to our musicians

and the conductor."

Helping the board with governance practices is where Kaufman's skills come in. "I really felt I had something to contribute there," she says. "And then something to contribute in terms of some modest donations every year to help the symphony be able to do what they needed to do for these kids beyond the grant writing that Lisa Lindley does throughout the year."

During the pandemic, the organization found ways to continue its mission. "Our Buddy Rogers Youth Symphony conductor, **James Beauton**, continues to mentor and teach, via video, alternating weeks of music theory driven videos with instructional application models," Kaufman says.

Post-pandemic, the symphony operates two orchestras — adult and youth — as well as five classroom-based after-school learning programs across the valley.

Kaufman has found her work on the board very fulfilling. "I think for women especially, when you've worked hard at your own career, you want to help other women who are in leadership roles, but you want them to increase their leadership influence. You want to give back. You're doing mentoring, you're helping women leaders really understand how much they can influence and how much power they could actually have to influence in the state and in their own lives. And so that's been a passion of mine for many years."

While the Delta variant has rendered aspects of the immediate future uncertain, the Coachella Valley Symphony hopes to present an outdoor Halloween concert in Rancho Mirage on Oct. 31. They've also secured some dates at the Annenberg Theater in 2022. Kaufman is excited about the new season and looks forward to continuing her work with the symphony.

To learn more about the Coachella Valley Symphony or to make a donation, visit cvsymphony.com.

As the philanthropy and special sections editor at *The Desert Sun*, Winston Gieseke writes about nonprofits, fundraising and people who give back in the Coachella Valley. Reach him at winston.gieseke@desertsun.com.