



Mental health heroes

What we can learn from the philanthropists taking action to reinforce resilience

“Just as the green sprouts come up through the cement in the sidewalk, there’s something about life and the human heart that wants to renew itself.”

DONOR
TARAJI P. HENSON

Project: When the “Empire” star sought a therapist for herself and her son, she realized how difficult it was to find compassionate care. A mere 4% of psychologists are Black, the American Psychological Association reports. She also was struck by an alarming rise in the suicide rate among Black children. To bolster mental health support for Black communities, Henson took action by creating the Boris Lawrence Henson Foundation in 2018. Since the start of the pandemic, the nonprofit has been offering free virtual therapy, helping 1,500 participants so far.

Takeaway: If you’re passionate about an issue and can’t find an existing charity that lives up to your vision, consider starting your own or using a donor-advised fund to make strategic grants within your own community.



*The statistics of Black children who’ve died by suicide have continued to rise; we cannot ignore that. ... I am compelled to do something.**

DONOR
MACKENZIE SCOTT

Project: Scott made headlines in 2020 by donating roughly \$6 billion of her fortune in a single year, a breathtaking pace. Taking a data-driven approach, she and her team of advisors spread this money across hundreds of community-based organizations in 50 states, Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C., leaving “no strings attached” to allow flexibility. Scott intentionally chose nonprofits such as Easterseals that provide mental health services and help meet the basic needs of people with disabilities, veterans, caregivers and their families.

Takeaway: When the need is great, don’t be afraid to give boldly – but first, do your homework with the help of those in your inner circle and trusted advisors.



*Because our research is data-driven and rigorous, our giving process can be human and soft.**

DONOR
MELINDA GATES

Project: Gates’ Pivotal Ventures helped fund the launch of The Upswing Fund for Adolescent Mental Health in October 2020. The fund plans to make grants to nonprofits to increase patient capacity, purchase telehealth and technology resources, and support efforts to address the barriers that keep young people from accessing care. It is especially interested in accelerating the cycle of innovation to make an outsized impact.

Takeaway: Philanthropists can play a key role in supporting unconventional approaches to big problems.



*Growing up is never easy – especially during a pandemic. ... Let’s make sure young people everywhere know they are not alone.**

Sources: “Ten Percent Happier” podcast; JAMA; American Psychological Association; SAMHSA; borishensonfoundation.org; mackenzie-scott.medium.com; pivotal-ventures.org; Forbes; easterseals.org; The Washington Post