

## Foundation converts young professionals into young philanthropists



Evyn Mages/For Capital Business - Ryan Rauner, a 29-year-old associate at Veatch Commercial Real Estate, chaired the Future Fund's inaugural gala in May.

### By [Vanessa Small](#), Published: August 8

Commercial real estate broker and philanthropist Ryan Rauner, 29, said he believes people in his age group have a responsibility to contribute to the community. So outside of work, he makes it his mission to turn young professionals into givers and dispel the stereotype that philanthropists are only wealthy and elderly.

"Young people want to give back," said Rauner. "You just have to get them in the door."

Rauner's entryway is the Northern Virginia Community Foundation's Future Fund, a new giving circle funded by the paychecks of nearly 100 professionals mostly in their 20s and 30s.

Future Fund is an effort the community foundation launched this spring after determining that it needed to attract a much younger, diversified donor base.

“The traditional model of an established old, white, wealthy family is no longer going to work,” said Sara Jaffe, the community foundation’s vice president. “We’re a diverse community of all ages and backgrounds, and we think our donor base should reflect that.”

After the group found through a survey that enough local young professionals were interested in the giving circle, it launched a marketing and recruiting plan.

Through social media, happy hours, presentations to young professionals groups and a gala, the foundation recruited 50 members in three months and raised \$50,000.

The now 90-member group will visit, interview and vote on which nonprofits will be the first to receive a grant from the fund next year.

In the meantime, the members are attending monthly presentations to learn about various community needs in Northern Virginia, networking events, volunteer activities and spreading the word to other Generation Y professionals. Rauner found, in this case, altering the message is key to attracting a donor population that, according to studies, is driven by technology, human connection and personal relationships.

“If a young person is more business-focused, you let them know that it will help their business. For people who just want a social connection, let them know it’s a place they can meet good people,” said Rauner, who chaired the fund’s inaugural gala in May.

The average member is 30 years old, working in a middle- to upper-middle management position in companies such as Northrop Grumman, Cardinal Bank, Ernst & Young, Goldman Sachs, Grant Thornton and Booz Allen. Nearly 25 percent are entrepreneurs.

“I’ve worked with 550 community foundations ... and this [young professionals giving circle] is something that is growing in popularity,” said Katy Moore, director of member services for the Washington Regional Association of Grantmakers. Dues are based on a sliding scale — members in their 20s pay \$200, 30s pay \$300 and 40s pay \$400.

“I’ve heard it said by the time you’re 30, you know who you are and you begin writing the legacy of your life,” said Rauner. “I’m happy that I’ve met the people I have at a time when I’m becoming the man I’m going to be.”