

# Doing Well By Doing Good By Delle Willett

## David and Ellen Dolgen chair Planned Parenthood anniversary

Between the two of them, David and Ellen Dolgen have chaired countless fundraising events, but this is the first time they have done it as a team.

Their project is a dinner celebrating the 51st anniversary of Planned Parenthood of the Pacific Southwest. Named “The Main Event,” its call to action is, “Get into the ring, join the fight, and be a champion for reproductive health care.”

The Dolgen’s mission for this event is to educate the community on exactly what Planned Parenthood does. “Most people don’t understand what they do and how close they are nationally to being shut down and/or having their services severely restricted,” explained Ellen.

The Dolgen’s involvement in Planned Parenthood comes from a respect for wellness and life—part of their sense of positive mission.

San Diego’s Planned Parenthood is the second largest in the U.S. with 19 centers in San Diego. Ninety five percent of what they do is provide lifesaving screenings.

“No organization works as hard as Planned Parenthood on preventing people from having unwanted pregnancies. One in three San Diego households are clients of Planned Parenthood. Where would these women go if it weren’t here?” they ask.

Both David and Ellen come from families where philanthropy was a way of life, a core value. “I

grew up in a household that was very interested in giving back to the community. My father was involved in politics and philanthropy. I used to follow him around, learning how to raise money at a very young age just by watching him,” said Ellen, a long-time professional fundraiser.

David’s father, an immigrant from the Ukraine, was a labor leader and a civil-rights activist. “From him I learned a lot about social justice. And my 96-year-old mother, who just passed away, was a role model of advocacy, volunteerism, and social action,” said David. “I’ve always been active in social justice issues and politics in one way or the other since I was a kid.”

The Dolgens are both very different in terms of how they come to the table. “David is very intellectual and analytical; I come from an emotionally charged, passionate perspective. We have the same idea about life, which is that it’s important to have purpose, to live beyond yourself, and to support the community you live in,” said Ellen.

David’s professional journey includes politics, finance, labor relations and commercial real estate in New York City, Washington, D.C. and Tucson, Ariz. Along with Ellen, he is a founder and principal of Dolgen Ventures, a private-equity investment firm, focusing on real estate investments throughout the country. Most recently, he founded

Housing Impact Managers, LLC, which couples the traditional goals of private equity investment with the social mission of providing opportunities for qualified working families to secure affordable and sustainable solutions to their housing needs.

Past chair of the board of the La Jolla Playhouse on which he continues to serve, David helps bring arts to the world. “We think it’s a very big part of good health. There’s an enormously strong correlation between art and wellbeing. It’s empirical, it’s a fact,” said David.

Through her own challenging change-of-life experience, Ellen has become an outspoken women’s health-and-wellness advocate and is founder and president of Menopause Mondays at EllenDolgen.com. She is the media’s go-to expert on the topic of perimenopause and menopause, and women’s health and wellbeing around the world, making guest appearances on numerous national television and radio news shows, writing, speaking, and blogging. Her motto is, “Suffering in silence is OUT. Reaching out is IN.”

This expertise provides a perfect segue for her serving on the Planned Parenthood board and the Community Advisory Board of Scripps Memorial Hospital La Jolla, and chairing and serving on boards of numerous health-related organizations. She wants to make sure that all women have the same ability that she does to



David and Ellen Dolgen

have good health care.

Married for 37 years, the Dolgens work hard at everything they do, even when it comes to how they spend their spare time.

“Ellen is a serial entertainer. There’s nothing we enjoy better than entertaining friends in our home,” said David. Other spare-time favorites are traveling, seeing movies, dancing and biking around their neighborhood in Coronado.

While the Planned Parenthood event may be their first philanthropic team effort, they’ve had lots of team-work practice in their business, Dolgen Ventures, and in their private lives raising their two children, Sarah, 34, and Jack, 31. And they are about to be partners in the most exciting team-work adventure that’s happening to them this year — becoming grandparents.

Living in San Diego full time for the last 12 years, David and Ellen have come to see San Diegans as very philanthropic and generous. “Fundraising in San Diego has never been a hard sell; people are passionate and committed to the wellbeing of our community,” they said.

“They’ve made it easy for us to do well by doing good.”