



◀ Anna Dailey celebrates her 60th birthday by inviting friends to give back to the community.

in May, arranged for a band, food, and drinks, and sent out invitations—300 of them. “After 60 years you get to know a pile of people,” she says. “I invited them all.” Another 500 invitations went out by email—one for every attorney in her law firm, Dinsmore & Shohl. In the end around 250 people attended.

Then came the most important part: Dailey chose three charities to highlight, all of them organizations that had touched her life in some way. Orbit Village, a project to alleviate poverty and give kids education opportunities in Kenya, was founded by an old friend of Dailey’s. She’s taken an interest in the project and given to it in the past. She helped start the Coonskin Park Foundation herself—she sits on the Kanawha County Parks and Recreation Commission and thought Coonskin Park, one of the largest and most popular parks in the system, needed a mechanism to collect donations. And the Ronald McDonald House is especially dear to Dailey. She stayed there more than two decades ago when she

PHILANTHROPY

A Party With Purpose

A Charleston attorney asks her friends for birthday gifts—for others.

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PHOTOGRAPHED BY CYNDY WATERS

Anna Dailey has never been one for big birthday parties, but when her husband proposed a big bash to celebrate her 60th she didn’t hate the idea—she figured it could be fun for a change. “But then I had to think about what to do about gifts—I didn’t want gifts,” she says. When a friend suggested she give donations to charity in lieu of gifts, the Charleston attorney realized she could leverage her birthday to create something meaningful.

Instead of casually suggesting guests donate to this or that charity, Dailey set out to plan a party around the idea of giving. Philanthropy wasn’t an afterthought—it was the party’s central theme. “I started calling it my party with a purpose,” Dailey says. She rented out the rotunda of University of Charleston for her birthday weekend

was a young mother—her son was being treated in a Pittsburgh hospital and she could hardly afford a hotel room. “It was a lifesaver at the time, and all these years I never had a chance to give back to them,” she says.

Dailey didn’t require donations from her guests—she thought of it less like a formal fundraiser and more like a big party revolving around the idea of philanthropy—but her guests came through anyway. The event raised close to \$15,000—\$9,500 for the Coonskin Park Foundation and around \$2,500 each for Orbit Village and the Ronald McDonald House of Southern West Virginia. “I remember when the first check arrived—I jumped up and down for joy,” she says. “It was so amazing to me that people were going to be using my birthday as an occasion to give.”