



Daniel Koshland presents a San Francisco Foundation Award to Sister Rose Maureen Kelly in 1965.

In 1982, The San Francisco Foundation established The Daniel E. Koshland Civic Unity Awards in honor of one of its founders and major benefactors. He built a reputation for **practical, bold, and even risky** philanthropy in his efforts to improve the quality of life for all Bay Area residents.

Daniel Koshland devoted his energy and resources toward alleviating injustices and discrimination. His focus was on **bringing together leaders** from neighborhoods, the private sector, government, and philanthropy to solve community problems.

The Koshland Program is administered by The San Francisco Foundation's Koshland Committee, which is comprised of Koshland family members and local leaders who are **committed to improving the quality of life** in the Bay Area.

# The Story of Daniel E. Koshland

*Each evening, after the sewing machines went quiet at the Levi's factory on Valencia Street and rolls of denim were put aside for the day, Lew Butler began English classes for the mostly Hispanic seamstresses. Women from Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Mexico, worn out from a day of hard work, stayed late to take advantage of this opportunity. Lew managed this program, starting in 1967, as part of an overall effort to help the Levi's employees adjust to their new life in America. On most nights, he saw a distinguished, balding man walking the factory floors, talking familiarly with employees, and offering rides home if it was raining.*

"I saw this guy all the time, I assumed he was a retired plant manager coming by to talk to his old employees and friends," recalled Lew. "The only thing I knew was that his name was Dan."

Within a few months Lew realized that this man was Daniel E. Koshland, the retired president of Levi Strauss. "That's just the type of guy Dan was – imagine, the former president showing up at the classes in the evening," said Lew. "He just cared about people."

Dan Koshland was a man of opportunity. He was born into wealth; his uncle Joseph Koshland was very successful during the late 1800s in the wool industry. Joseph's company was a family run business with offices in Boston and San Francisco. Dan grew up in San Francisco, attending Pacific Heights Grammar School. His large, tight-knit Jewish family was well-educated and loved to converse. Dan spent many afternoons eating lunch with relatives at his grandparent's house on Pine Street. Eventually Dan followed in the footsteps of many of his family members and attended the University of California at Berkeley.

Young and energetic after he earned his degree, Dan traveled to Japan, Indonesia, and China before starting his banking career in Germany. He lived there in the unsettled years before World War I and all around him he saw Germans efficiently preparing for war. Dan left Germany on the last train taking Americans out of the country and landed in London. Shortly thereafter he boarded a passenger liner for New York City to continue his career in banking.

When America entered the war, Dan enlisted in officer training for the Army. In a 1968 interview he expressed his frustration of not being sent to fight in Europe because of his German heritage. "We were a very unhappy group of

officers because we felt we were in the war and wanted to do our duty. But I was refused the transfer to the Intelligence Corps because of my name, a German name."

Dan served out his military duty on Governor's Island off of New York before returning to San Francisco with his young wife, Eleanor. It was in San Francisco where his reputation grew and he became known as one of the great philanthropists of the city. He joined the Levi Strauss Company and, as their blue jeans business exploded, he helped it become one of the world's leading garment manufacturers.

As his wealth grew, so did his desire to give it away. "People who had illnesses in their family, or were artists struggling to get their start, or were starting some city charity, would ask my father for help, because he had money. He realized how lucky he was to be wealthy and felt an obligation to share," recalled his daughter, Phyllis Friedman.

Dan Koshland had two essential qualities as a philanthropist. One was to seek out and believe in the power of the individual; he felt that the unsung heroes of a community could do many things if given a chance. Second was his utter humbleness; he often refused to have things named after himself and did much of his philanthropy anonymously. "He was a typical modest guy and thought that if you had wealth, it's a privilege, and you ought to give back, not promote yourself," recalled Lew.

The list of charitable organizations and foundations that Dan was involved with is immense. Through this experience he became the leading figure in the effort to create a community foundation in San Francisco. Dan saw this as an opportunity for people of all ranges of wealth to create a fund and have a vehicle to help them achieve philanthropic results similar to the private foundations of the very wealthy. In 1948 a new community foundation was launched as The San Francisco Foundation with a grant from the Columbia Foundation and donations from Dan and other civic leaders.

From these visionary beginnings, The San Francisco Foundation has become one of the nation's largest community foundations with more than \$850 million in assets. It continues to build on his vision through its \$68 million in annual grantmaking, the Community Leadership Awards, community-based initiatives, and the Koshland Civic Unity Program.

From its inception in 1982, the Koshland Program was created as a way to honor Dan and promote his sense of community involvement. "When Dan passed away, he left a very large amount of money for The San Francisco Foundation's endowment," said Lew Butler. To celebrate his legacy Lew and other friends of Dan, along with his family members, paid tribute to Dan by creating the Koshland Program.

“I think he would be thrilled with the success of the Koshland Program” said Phyllis. “The Program captures the essence of my father.”

This essence is seen in the economically underdeveloped neighborhoods that the Koshland Program works in, and the integrity and hard work of its Awardees. From the first neighborhood chosen in 1983, San Francisco’s Western Addition, to the most recent, Bayview, the personal transformation of the Awardees has led to opportunity and growth in the neighborhood.

The Koshland Committee oversees the Koshland Program and is as diverse as the neighborhoods. “Dan would be pleased with the ethnic composition of the Koshland Committee – completely different from what any committee looked like in his day,” said Lew.

During his life Dan believed strongly in the value of every person. He was an early champion of civil rights and initiated the Council on Civic Unity to address rising racial tensions. Dan was famous for his ability to get along with everyone, from having conversations about the personal lives of seamstresses at Levi’s to inviting the paperboy at the train station home for lunch. Treating people with respect was in his blood.

The Koshland Program is honored to continue this work. Over the years, the individuals we have awarded truly are the unsung heroes of their communities. From teachers to community organizers, from youth counselors to deli owners, the Koshland Awardees embody the spirit of Dan’s philanthropy – they are the neighbors a community needs. Twenty-five years and going strong, the program designed by Dan’s family and friends in his memory feels rejuvenated and ready to dig in for another 25. In this light, we are sure Dan would humbly admire all the work that has been done in his name.



Percy Pinkney receives a San Francisco Foundation Award from Daniel Koshland in 1966.



Daniel Koshland with members of the California Youth Symphony, who received a 1963 grant to support a tour of Japan.