

Inspired Giving

An Interview with Alexandra M. Cohen, President, Steven & Alexandra Cohen Foundation

EDITORS' NOTE Alex Cohen is the President of the Steven & Alexandra Cohen Foundation, the nonprofit organization that she and her husband, Steve, co-founded in 2001. She is the inspiration behind the Foundation, directing its giving toward underserved communities, Lyme and tickborne disease research, children, psychedelics and mental health, the arts, and sustainability. Cohen is also the President of the Amazin' Mets Foundation, which she created in 2021 after she and Steve purchased the New York Mets. Cohen is known as "Tia Alex" to Mets fans and is an advocate for women in sports. On game days, you can find her giving out tickets to families around the stadium, hosting community leaders, nurses, teachers, and hospital workers at Citi Field, and chatting with fans. Cohen was born in Harlem, New York and grew up in Washington Heights. After studying communications at New York's Manhattan College, she worked in the financial industry until she married Steve in 1992. Since then, she has spent her time raising their family and focusing on their philanthropic endeavors. Cohen was named one of the "50 Most Powerful Women in U.S. Philanthropy" by Inside Philanthropy and serves on the Bob Woodruff Foundation Honorary Leadership Council.



Alexandra M. Cohen

give back to our community. We are committed to inspiring philanthropy and community service by creating awareness, offering guidance, and leading by example to show the world what giving can do. Our grants support public 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations that help people in need or solve complex problems.

How has the Foundation evolved over its more than 20 years in existence?

We have a personal connection to every cause that we support – we call it "Inspired Giving." This allows us to always meet the greatest needs of our community and change course when necessary. I'm proud of the support we've been able to provide to important causes over the past 20 years.

Inspired Giving has led us to create new initiatives like the Giving Tour, where we boarded a bus traveling cross country to track down good people doing good work and support them in any way we could. Now a core initiative of the Steven & Alexandra Cohen Foundation, the Giving Tour aims to make major gifts and inspire giving at a local level in "forgotten America," particularly in the areas that don't typically receive funding or major interest. Some of my favorite memories are

traveling across the country and meeting inspirational people and organizations on our Giving Tour trips.

We also recently explored new ways to give through avenues like our Awareness Date Giving initiative and opening our first-ever request for proposals.

What areas does the Foundation support?

We support areas including underserved communities, children's health and education, Lyme and tickborne disease research, psychedelics and mental health, the arts, and sustainability.

You also serve as president of the Amazin' Mets Foundation, which you created in 2021 after your husband, Steve, and you purchased the New York Mets. Will you discuss the work of the Amazin' Mets Foundation?

As the philanthropic arm of the New York Mets, the Amazin' Mets Foundation aims to serve our community and inspire others to make a lasting impact, on and off the field. We support needed services and opportunities for children, families, and underserved groups in the neighborhoods around Citi Field and the Mets affiliate teams.

We've renovated a neighborhood baseball field, supported local little league teams, and opened the Cohen Family Wellness

FOUNDATION BRIEFS The Steven & Alexandra Cohen Foundation (steveandalex.org) is committed to inspiring philanthropy and community service by creating awareness, offering guidance, and leading by example to show the world what giving can do. The Foundation's grants support nonprofit organizations based in the United States that either help people in need or solve complex problems. The Foundation also spearheads grassroots campaigns to encourage others to give. As of December 2022, the Foundation has provided over \$1 billion of charitable support.

The Amazin' Mets Foundation (amazinmetsfoundation.org) is the philanthropic arm of the New York Mets. Since its inception in 2021, the Amazin' Mets Foundation has funded over \$6.9 million in grants to over 120 organizations in the community, including the communities surrounding affiliate teams.

What was the vision for creating the Steven & Alexandra Cohen Foundation and how do you define the Foundation's mission?

We created the Steven & Alexandra Cohen Foundation in 2001 to help people in need and



The Cohen Family Wellness Center was funded by a \$5 million contribution from the Steven & Alexandra Cohen Foundation and a \$50,000 contribution from the Amazin' Mets Foundation. In partnership with The Child Center of New York, the new Queens facility fills a critical gap in services for young New Yorkers with mental health challenges



Alex Coben at Citi Field where she frequently welcomes local community heroes to attend games



Alex Coben is pictured with the Mets Vet Dogs, two service dogs in training for disabled veterans and first responders. The Amazin' Mets Foundation sponsored the dogs through a partnership with America's Vet Dogs. The Mets are the first MLB team to welcome a future service dog

Center in partnership with the Steven & Alexandra Cohen Foundation and The Child Center of NY in Woodside, Queens. The new Cohen Family Wellness Center is an innovative 10,000-square-foot facility that offers multiple levels of mental healthcare for young New Yorkers with serious emotional disturbance or substance abuse issues. It is expected to serve tens of thousands of residents per year. Other recent initiatives include supporting the construction of the first ADA compliant playground in Port St. Lucie County.

We are committed to our neighbors and want to make sure that if there is a need in the community, people know that they can reach out to us.

Where did your passion for philanthropy and giving back come from?

I learned so much from my mother at an early age. Growing up in Washington Heights, she always showed me that kindness isn't a choice – it's a responsibility that we have to support our neighbors and community. Whenever I have felt vulnerable throughout my life, the thought of helping others has always been a source of strength and solace. Going

through hard times myself has always made me want to go above and beyond so that others don't have to suffer.

What are the different ways that you feel you can make an impact in philanthropic work?

While we frequently support larger capital campaigns, some of our most impactful work is done by providing smaller grants to local community-focused organizations that help people obtain essential items like diapers, food, and a roof over their heads at a time when they need it most.

Most importantly, we are passionate about contributing to change-making organizations so that they can keep doing what they do best – helping communities rise and solving complex problems.

While much of philanthropy is focused on writing checks, you give your time, energy, and ideas to the causes you support. Will you share more about that?

Our goal is to make a positive difference in people's lives, whether through making a grant or spreading kindness through our day-to-day interactions. We frequently volunteer, and also encourage others to give their time by volunteering or sharing a talent or skill. It doesn't take much to spread kindness – a simple interaction can change someone's day.

With the impact that you have made and lives that you have touched over the years with your philanthropic work, are you able to reflect and take moments to appreciate what you have accomplished?

I'm very grateful – but it's our amazing grantee partners that deserve the credit. We are honored to support their important work and help people in need. ●



Alex Coben is pictured volunteering at God's Love We Deliver, a Steven & Alexandra Cohen Foundation grantee. Volunteers prepare and deliver meals to New York City residents in need