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CORRECTION The article reads: "Total personal wealth in the United States plunged from \$64.5 trillion in 2006 to \$48.7 trillion in 2009, according to Paul G. Schervish, director of the Center on Wealth and Philanthropy at Boston College, citing data from Giving USA, a philanthropy journal.

In fact the statistics on wealth did not come from Giving USA, but from a unique analysis of the 2007 Survey of Consumer Finances by the Center on Wealth and Philanthropy at Boston College.

Fund-raising galas give way to personal appeals The Boston Globe

In a post-Madoff, recessionary era, Jewish nonprofits retool strategies

By Hinda Mandell
Globe Correspondent / December 6, 2009

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Only months after Bernard Madoff's arrest, the people who run Gateways, a group that helps local children with special needs, were faced with a difficult decision.

Should they go ahead with a major fund-raising campaign, amid a market crash and a donor base that was frightened and tapped out because of the Wall Street broker's swindling? Or should they hold off?

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They forged ahead. They netted \$2.3 million in large gifts from 17 families, including a \$500,000 gift from the Brookline-based Ruderman Family Foundation, to be disbursed over five years.

It takes effort to remember a time when "Madoff" was nothing more than a last name, and when the recession didn't have wallets in lockdown. For a cluster of small, local Jewish nonprofits that rely on foundations and individuals to meet the demands of their budgets, a look at a post-Madoff world reveals a roller coaster where dreams were alternately shattered and came true. In fact, some say the financial circumstances of the past year have refocused nonprofits' missions by cutting down on bells and whistles, and by soliciting community supporters.

Jay Ruderman estimated that his family's foundation lost "hundreds of thousands but not more" to the swindle. A financial adviser had invested foundation money with Madoff. Ruderman said he did not know of these investments until news of the scandal broke.

Still, Ruderman, who is president of the foundation, said: "If you really want to be a leader - these are the times you have to step up. The easiest thing to do would be to say we've been hurt; we need to take a few years off. I don't think we can afford that, because there are others who need our help during these times."

Locally, galas have been replaced with personal fund-raising solicitations. Fleishy budgets have been trimmed of fat, and executive directors have held their breath to see if pledges materialize into checks. They are well aware that some donors are anxious and suspicious.

"I think the biggest difference is almost attitudinal," said Gail T. Reimer, executive director of the Jewish Women's Archive, based in Brookline. "People seem more nervous this time than ever before."

Total personal wealth in the United States plunged from \$64.5 trillion in 2006 to \$48.7 trillion in 2009, according to Paul G. Schervish, director of the Center on Wealth and Philanthropy at Boston College, citing data from Giving USA, a philanthropy journal.

Locally, a base of grass-roots donors has helped pull these nonprofits through a dry spell.

Jan Schwartz, development and communications manager of Newton-based Gateways, which provides Jewish educational services to about 200 students with special needs in the Boston area, described her organization's mission as "recession-proof." More than half of Gateways' \$1.6 million budget is funded through individuals and families.

"The one thing I'm very proud of is our median donation remains at \$180," she

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