

## **Learn the Joy of Giving**

Today is National Philanthropy Day. Go ahead. Hug a charity.

By Ken MacLeod, for the Times & Transcript, November 14, 2002.

Ah sweet philanthropy! Where would we be without it?

The Oxford Canadian Dictionary defines philanthropy as "the disposition or effort to promote the happiness and well-being of one's fellow people, especially by gifts of money, work, etc."

Certainly our community would be impoverished without the efforts of charities and not-for-profit organizations. Imagine our own community without Moncton Headstart, the McNaughton Youth Parenting Centre, the YMCA, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, the Capitol Theatre, our three Moncton area universities, two hospitals and the many places of worship, to name a few. The Moncton we know and love and promote simply would not exist in any way we recognize it.

Or, think of what has been learned through research promoted by the Heart & Stroke Foundation in New Brunswick, through breast cancer research and education or the work of the Canadian Paraplegic Association.

Certainly non-profit organizations would have no hope of doing their important work without you and me and others to support them.

But why should I support charities and not-for-profit organizations? Personally speaking, I think it's in my own best interests, as a human being, as a citizen and as a member of the community.

To ignore people whose needs exceed my own is to choose against their well-being. It's less than human. If I jealously guard what I have, and never open my hands to others, I diminish my own soul. If I am stingy, I rob myself of the satisfaction of helping someone else, in situations where there is no tangible benefit to me. It's a joy we miss if we think only of the cost.

I also feel it's in my interest as a member of the community. When the needs of people are ignored by either government or those of us passing by, the quality of all our lives are diminished. The quality of our communities can be measured, at least in part, by how we treat its weakest members. If we make room, give them a helping hand, provide a boost over the next barrier, surely we're investing in the health and well being of our whole community.

Helping others is in my interest as a citizen as well. The person who is completely on the outside of mainstream life has no personal stake in our democratic institutions, our business life, or civil society. Think, for example, of those people, young or older, who finally learn to read. They will become better citizens, more likely to participate, to vote, to be informed, and to understand that they have both a place in society and a reason to preserve and enrich it.

Either for reasons of compassion or to improve our world, non-profit organizations make a crucial difference. It is with this in mind that, on National Philanthropy Day, I propose a dozen ways to love your local charity.

1. Enlist as a volunteer. There's nothing quite like it for investing in your own community.
2. Make an extra, unsolicited gift to your favourite not-for-profit organization. It doesn't have to be huge to have an impact, especially when considering the encouragement it generates.
3. Deliver the gift in person and thank the receptionist, or whoever you see there, for the work they do.
4. Think of a need that really tugs at your heart. Find out what charity addresses that need. Call them up and ask for some information on their work. When the information comes, read it.
5. When you're done reading it, pass the literature on to someone else.
6. Here's a tough one: listen to a telephone solicitation all the way through. If you still don't want to give, thank the caller anyway.
7. Take a bag of groceries to the local food bank. Take some protein-rich goods that are usually scarce, like tuna, or peanut butter, or canned meat and stews. And splurge! It's National Philanthropy Day.
8. Ask the United Way for a list of their member agencies. Choose one to find out more about.
9. Send a thank you note to someone who volunteers at the hospital, in a reading circle, a food bank, a youth program or your church.

## in the news

Helping non-profits succeed.

10. Go visit a local charity and find out what they do. (Call ahead to make arrangements).

Be careful with these suggestions, however. Such initiatives often lead to further involvement, which, come to think of it, would also be a fine way to celebrate Canada's National Philanthropy Day.

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