



## INCREASING YOUR CHARITABLE FOOTPRINT

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There is a lot of talk these days about reducing our impact on the environment. Faced with difficult economic times, we are also being forced to cut expenses and save money. In this era of downsizing, charity can easily take a back seat to seemingly more important concerns.

Well-run charitable organizations are a cornerstone of American society – they fill societal needs efficiently and economically. Americans have a long and proud history of charitable giving. Now more than ever, we need to find sustainable ways to support our nonprofit organizations.

We need to think beyond just making annual financial donations to our favorite causes. By integrating charity into our day-to-day activities, we can reduce our impact on the environment, save money, and benefit worthy organizations all at the same time. Think of it as increasing your charitable footprint.

### Here are a few suggestions for leveraging your charitable impact:

#### Plan a Party

Celebrating a birthday, anniversary or other special occasion? Many nonprofit organizations offer unique settings for special events. Contact your local museum, theater or YMCA and find out if you can hold your party on site – either during or after hours. Any fees you pay will go to support the organization's mission. And you will be introducing your guests to the organization at the same time.

#### Make It a Date

Skip the "cheap date" – go on a charitable one. Turn an organization's annual fundraising gala into your own special night out. The \$100 or \$200 you spend won't seem as onerous if you consider what you might spend for a night on the town. You'll be supporting a good cause and have fun at the same time. Your date might even think you have a heart of gold.

#### Do Your Shopping at the Museum Store

Need a birthday gift, a housewarming present, or a little something to take to Grandma? Museum stores offer unique gifts for many occasions or for no occasion at all. You usually do not need to pay admission to visit the museum store. Some museums and other charities even have online shopping. A gift from the store at your favorite museum or charity not only makes a unique statement, it contributes to the organization's bottom line.

#### Buy It at the Auction

Silent and live auctions are a common feature of charity special events these days. You can often get some great bargains on unique goods and services. Before you go, make a list of birthdays, anniversaries and other special events and shop accordingly. Think about your entertainment and vacation plans and bring a calendar – tickets to shows and sporting events, weekend getaways and vacation spots are a regular staple at fundraising auctions. You can get some pretty neat stuff at charity auctions – sometimes at great prices – and benefit a worthy cause at the same time.

#### Take a Charity to Work

Did you know you can double your charitable giving? Many employers offer to match your charitable contributions. Find out what options are offered by your employer. In a growing number of states, certain employers can also give to charities in lieu of local and state taxes. If you are a business owner, find out whether you can take advantage of these programs. Businesses can donate goods and services to needy charities too.

#### Hold a Yard Sale

Here's an incentive to clean out your closets – you can donate unneeded and unused items to charity and simplify your life at the same time. Some organizations post "wish lists" of things they especially need. Or you can hold a yard sale



and donate the proceeds to a special cause.

### **Host an Event**

Turn a simple get-together into a special cause. Contact a local charity and offer to hold a dinner party or other special event in their honor. Invite your friends and encourage them to join you in making a contribution to a worthy cause. Perhaps the organization can provide something related to its mission – music from a music school, or objects from a museum collection – to make the event extra special.

### **Check Out Online Opportunities**

Investigate the possibilities of social networking to increase contributions to your favorite charity. Check out NetworkforGood.org and other websites which allow you to turn your social networking into a force for good.

**If you make charitable giving a priority in your life,  
you can find many ways to maximize your charitable footprint.**