

ArtReach Chicago

Public Service Announcement: On Philanthropy and Charitable Giving

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INTRODUCTION:

This “Public Service Announcement on Philanthropy and Charitable Giving” is a guide that explains many of the common misconceptions about giving to non-profits, and how you can adjust your giving strategy to have the biggest impact.

MISCONCEPTION #1:

Many nonprofits and community organizations don't like the term charity. It sets up a power dynamic where you are generous and “they” are needy and misses all the strengths and abundance that a community can have even without money. Help to re-frame the vocabulary about this and think of it as sup-ported good work, a project, a valuable community, a collective or an organization, not a charity.



MISCONCEPTION #2:



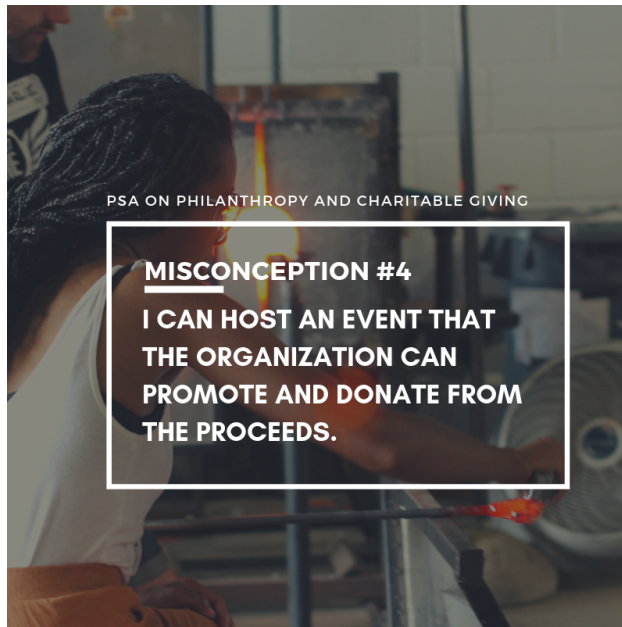
This is one that might be at least partially true, but is at best half of a larger truth. Those who have been denied opportunities and options have a lot to offer the world, and their offerings have been mostly silenced. By changing this mindset when giving, we create a more productive and inclusive environment that respects the abilities of all those who contribute to the success of nonprofits.

MISCONCEPTION #3:

This is true BUT training, managing, and effectively using volunteers, while giving them a good experience, can be very time consuming. Many larger organizations have easy ways to plug in that are adaptable to a variety of temperaments and skill levels, but for smaller organizations, general volunteers can be overwhelming. Consider if you have a particular skill that you are good at that you can volunteer for a defined project or simply be ready to clean/file/contribute in less sexy and/or atypical ways. Avoid preconceptions about what might be needed and approach ready to learn.



MISCONCEPTION #4:



This is a very kind impulse and, if done well, can result in money, good will, exposure, and an expanded network for the organization you love. However, unless you are almost entirely self-sufficient in organizing such a party or event, this could risk putting a big, unexpected burden on the very organization you want to help. It's okay to ask for logos, social media handles or hashtags, and maybe any already existing tools or templates an organization uses for

events, but avoid asking for advice, promotion, and other frequent requests for things that may not yet exist or be easily accessed. A house party, restaurant fundraiser, or presentation at a book club can be just as effective as a grand, time-consuming event.

MISCONCEPTION #5:

This “generosity to the thing that you know best” makes sense so that you can best see the the direct impact of your dollars, time, or energy. However, funding of “overhead” including basic space, utilities, and the human beings dedicated to the work, can be very hard to secure. Remember to value and invest in the people who hold up the work that you love. Give generally when possible and let the organization make good decisions about how best to make your money work.





FIVE THINGS YOU CAN DO WITH MONEY:

1. Buy gifts, goods or services for yourself or friends that support the organization and participants.
2. Donate money if you can. Become a recurring donor who gives monthly if possible.
3. Give or buy them stuff. Especially stuff the organization asks for. If they don't already have one, you could help them make online wishlist(s) with local or internet businesses or conduct a supply drive for things that the organization needs frequently.
4. Find out if your employer matches your donations or has a corporate giving department that might be willing to sponsor an organization, buy a table at an event, or might consider paying the organization for a team building program for their employees.
5. Treat the staff to a special meal, treat or other gift to let them know you see them and support the work that they do.

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SIX THINGS YOU CAN DO **WITHOUT** MONEY:

1. Name your capacities, financially, professionally, and in terms of time and then ask how you can best support the organization.
2. Position yourself as a learner. For instance, take lessons or a class from a participant or community member.
3. Give feedback publicly on things you notice that you like and privately on things that might be improved (bonus points if you can improve them yourself on behalf of the organization!)
4. Spread the word. Bring at least 2 friends to all public events you know of. Comment, like, and share social media posts, emails, flyers, and other communications.
5. Ask to help make phone calls or write letters to thank people for supporting the organization and to help make the thank you personal.
6. Try to get attention for the organization from press or other opinion makers. Find ways to share testimonials and positive stories about things you have learned from the organization.

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