



64 Ways to Do Good

Why Give?

In tough economic times, lots of people hold on tighter to their money, cutting back on everything from lattes to charitable donations. Charities need help more this winter than they have in a long time. More people are showing up at food pantries and homeless shelters, including families that have never sought assistance before. Many people wait until the end of the year to make donations; this season could be a make-or-break time for nonprofits.

Where to Give?

Washington is home to more than 8,000 nonprofits, and choosing which ones to support isn't easy. We consulted dozens of local philanthropy experts — including heads of foundations and corporate-giving coordinators — to come up with this list of charities. We also considered which groups have received awards for the impact they've had. We focused on organizations that are based in Washington and do their work here.

We heard good things about more than 300 charities, and narrowing it down was hard. We chose the groups that were recommended most often and most enthusiastically. We strove for geographic diversity, a mix of well-established groups and up-and-comers, and organizations that address a wide variety of needs. We gave preference to groups that do a good job managing both volunteers and donations.

Of our charities that have been rated by Charity Navigator, the largest nonprofit watchdog, all have earned at least three out of four stars. The rest have been reviewed by expert grant makers and have a stamp of approval from at least one of the following: the Catalogue for Philanthropy, the Community Foundation for the National Capital Region, and the Meyer Foundation.

Spread Learning

Child and Family Network Centers

This network of free preschools helps get low income minority children on track for academic success. It also runs a family literacy program and provides social services to parents. Kids in the program have shown almost twice the gains over the course of a year as their peers nationwide.

How to help: Read to kids. Help parents learn English. Giving: \$250 buys library books for a classroom; \$1,020 provides a month of full-day preschool for one child.

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At the Child and Family Network Center's free preschool in Alexandria, Ana Hernandez works with Wilson Acosta and his classmates.