Strategies to make charitable giving fun and meaningful

BY STUART COMSTOCK-GAY AND CYNTHIA PRITCHARD
Guest columnists

Bombarded by requests for charitable gifts this holiday season? Overwhelmed by bell ringers collecting coins and kids selling baked goods? Want to give, but not sure how to make it meaningful and fun?

More than 30% of all charitable giving occurs in December, and 12% is done within the last three days of the year, according to the Network for Good. If you're among the generous people still finalizing your charitable giving for 2019, consider these strategies to make your giving simple, joyful and powerful.

Make giving a family affair

Because many of us have focused time with family and the topic of giving is front of mind, it's a prime opportunity to teach younger generations about how philanthropy fits into your family's values and financial planning.

Giving as a family helps children grow up to be happier adults with closer family ties, according to a 2018 study by Fidelity Charitable. The study surveyed 3,000 individuals who gave to charity and itemized their taxes for 2017. Of those 3,000 individuals, 49% grew up with strong giving traditions. You can start the conversation by discussing what your family values and how those values align with your charitable giving to date. This could include conversations about faith, community and personal experiences that have guided your choices about what causes to support.

Give to your passion

Everyone likes to support charitable causes related to things they're passionate about, and that is a fun way to energize the conversation and engage family members of all ages. Does your family love music? Are you excited about the conversation and engage family causes related to things they're passionate about?

Make it joyful

Research shows us that giving makes us happier. The staffs of non-profit organizations are working on the ground every day, working full time on the cause you care about. They understand where the greatest needs are,” Bravo said. “An unrestricted gift is going to have the greatest impact on the cause you care about.”

Manage the money

Once you've decided what you care about, talk about what your family has available to give. Whether it's a small or large amount, your family can designate a budget for charitable giving. Some families designate an amount for each individual to give, while others work together to distribute the full amount.

This is a great opportunity for some basic lessons in budgeting, and it's also a positive way to start talking about family finances. So often, the first time we talk with our children about finances is when we must prepare a will or have other end-of-life conversations. Those are difficult talks. But talking about giving money away to make a difference? That's downright joyful.

You can also give more when you maximize tax advantages, and it's not too late to make charitable gifts that could reduce your 2019 taxes. Gifts made to nonprofit organizations by midnight on Dec. 31 count toward the 2019 tax year. But remember that recent changes in tax regulations have affected the number of people who itemize deductions, so it's important to check with your accountant or financial adviser.

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For information about these and other charitable giving opportunities, contact your financial adviser or the Delaware Community Foundation, 302.571.8004 or info@delcf.org.

Questions to guide family giving conversations

• What are some things that you enjoy? What makes you happy?
• What could you do to help other people enjoy those things?
• What are some things you worry about? What do you wish were better in the world?
• What are some organizations that you currently give to? Why?
• What would you like to achieve with your giving?
• How do you want people to describe you?

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