

# Engage the Next Generation in Giving

Donors, including those in the Baby Boom and “X” generations, are involving children in family giving and volunteering at younger ages than previous generations. Today, many parents and adults include both children and young adults in philanthropic activities as a way to pass on personal values, provide shared experiences, establish traditions, and enjoy a satisfying family venture. Sometimes parents and other adults also have the goal of preparing children to manage the family’s philanthropy one day.

Simply put, engaging the next generation is about more than money.

As one 20-something involved in her family’s philanthropy shared: “[It] has given me the perspective that doing good can really be a lifestyle and not just a one- or two-time event. I think that, once you catch the bug of doing good for the world, it doesn’t just stop with philanthropy. It molds the way you set out to do business or the school you choose to attend or even the people you let into your life.”

In this resource, we’ll explore how today’s donors are creating a *culture* of family giving, from sharing the family’s history to engaging in service projects and volunteerism, teaching financial literacy to facilitating discretionary giving. We’ll also highlight resources to help you engage your family’s children and young adults and set the stage for a lifetime of giving.



## Start With Your History

To create *your* culture of family giving, begin by helping the youngsters in your life, whether children or young adults, understand their history. The telling of family stories inherently helps to relay the values your family holds dear, and the experience of telling these stories can be a fascinating one, grounding your giving in your unique history.

Often, sharing family history can be a particularly special experience for grandparents and grandchildren. Grandchildren can even prepare questions for their grandparents about their childhood memories, pivotal experiences, or lessons learned over time.

*The Grandparent Legacy Project* includes a workbook and helpful list of sample questions as well as interviews with a diverse group of philanthropic grandparents. See the Resources section for information on where to order.

## Talk About Giving

By no surprise, adults who are uncomfortable talking about money often avoid talking about giving. But talking about giving is vitally important. As one philanthropic expert says, “When is the time to talk about giving with your kids? The first time they say *mine!*”

Talk about the gifts you’ve been given, monetary and otherwise. Talk about community needs and nonprofits in your community that you care about. Talk about your passions, your involvement in giving and volunteerism, and your evolution as a donor. And encourage them to talk with you about their experiences.

Let the young people in your family know that being a philanthropist can be a wonderful and ongoing learning opportunity for them—as it continues to be for you. It’s an opportunity to learn about others, about the community, and about ways they can put their talents to work to make a difference.

One 16-year-old involved in her family’s giving shared the following:

*Philanthropy introduced me to a girl who lives just a half-hour from me. We are both debaters, are the same age, and like the same foods. But our lives have been different in ways I can’t even imagine. I have been blessed with opportunity, but her high school didn’t have a debate team before this year. I am honored to have had a hand in starting the team at her school, through a grant to the National Association of Urban Debate Leagues. My [giving] goes to improving literacy and graduation rates, but philanthropy is not just an opportunity to improve numbers. It’s an opportunity to help real people, with their own personalities, ambitions, and dreams.*

With young children, you can use terrific books to introduce philanthropy and related concepts (see the Resources section), or you can even do an art project, such as:

- Painting a postcard and sending it to someone as appreciation for a gift, defined broadly (e.g., something given or shared, love shown, something taught)
- Decorating an individual giving box in which the child or family saves change for charity
- Making a collage as a family with your wishes for a better world
- Cutting out silhouettes of hands and writing on them ways we can help with our actions

## Volunteer Together

More and more, families are intertwining volunteerism and service work with their philanthropy.

As Susan Price writes in *The Giving Family*, “Volunteering is one of the best ways to build a child’s character and self-esteem...They acquire new skills, develop confidence and maturity, put their own problems in perspective, meet people from other backgrounds, and learn teamwork and civic responsibility. For families, volunteering is a good way to spend quality time together, share experiences, establish traditions, and have fun, all while helping the community.” For teens and young adults, volunteerism is also a great way to identify their own passions and areas of philanthropic interest.

You can volunteer as part of a larger group—at Habitat for Humanity or a local soup kitchen, for example. Or you can volunteer on your own as a family, purchasing food to donate to an area food bank or choosing holiday presents for children in need. Opportunities often arise through your existing religious or school affiliations. See the Resources section for other ways to find opportunities to volunteer.

One large charitable family in Southern California organizes monthly service projects for family members at organizations the family supports, and even took a family service trip to India to volunteer together. The family’s goal is to “educate the next generation about philanthropy at an early age in hopes that they understand the importance of giving back.”

## Teach Financial Values and Literacy

Involving the next generation in philanthropy can be part of a broader process of teaching children about money and finances, including how to spend money responsibly, the value of saving, and ways to overcome discomfort about wealth.

For young children, you might give a *three-part allowance*, with a part for the child to spend, a part to save, and a part to donate. One family asks their children to research and select where to donate, and also to write a letter to go along with the check.

Some families open a young person's giving account in the child's name. The child then receives—and learns to review—account statements, and, when the child reaches an agreed-upon age, he or she can award the funds to charities of his or her choosing. This can even be done on a small scale. “In what I might pay for gym classes or piano lessons in a year,” said one parent who opened an account, “this offers a lifelong lesson.”

Helping teens increase their financial literacy can also help them to save, spend responsibly, invest, understand money as power, and develop their capacity for economic self-sufficiency. You might:

- Talk with your teens about financial issues such as the value of saving and saving for college, finding ways to earn money, and financial peer pressure.
- Help your teens learn about budgeting on a weekly, monthly, and yearly basis.
- Help your teens set up a savings account or a tax-free account (such as a Roth IRA). Match their contributions to these accounts with your own contributions.

One family encourages their children to participate in family community service projects. On a family vacation to Tanzania, they visited a school that their family foundation was supporting. The teenage son was so taken by the experience that, when the family returned home, he raised an additional \$2,000 for the school.

## Use Discretionary Giving

*Discretionary giving*, or allowing young people in the family to distribute a portion of funds fairly autonomously, can be a wonderful opportunity for young people to take on real giving in a scaled, age-appropriate manner. You might start small: One family designates \$5 per month of each child's allowance for charity. Or you might allow your teens to designate family gifts of a certain dollar amount. To encourage personal giving, some families match family members' donations with a 1:1 or higher match with funds from the family's donor advised fund (DAF) or foundation.

DAFs are a particularly great tool for discretionary giving. Said one donor, “DAFs allow the next generation to have the experience of giving in a way that gets Dad out of it but keeps the legal controls in place.” A philanthropic advisor echoed this sentiment, saying, “DAFs create a malleable, creative space where the younger generation can pick up skills, even at a young age, about what it means to be an effective donor.”

## General Strategies

All in all, involving children in giving is one of the most common challenges faced by donors. Here are some general tips offered by parents and grandparents with experience involving children and sustaining their interest.

- **Start now.** Begin philanthropic activities with children when they are very young.
- **Let children decide what projects to support with their money and time.** Give them room to follow their own philanthropic interests, or—particularly in the case of teens—make decisions on their own that have real consequences.
- **Be a role model as a volunteer and a donor.** Take children with you to volunteer, or on site visits; talk to them about your donations.
- **Make giving a year-round project,** not just something to do during the holidays.
- **Expect your children to serve and give.**
- **Praise them for their philanthropic accomplishments.**
- **Teach them to manage money.**
- **Have the right expectations.** Avoid involving children in philanthropy with the intention of turning each into a great philanthropist. The child's interests or abilities may not match.

*These guidelines are based on material in *The Giving Family: Raising Our Children to Help Others* by Susan Crites Price. Council on Foundations, 2000.*

## Resources

**Exponent Philanthropy** Membership organization for foundations, donor advised funds, giving circles, and other philanthropists that give with few or no staff.

[www.exponentphilanthropy.org](http://www.exponentphilanthropy.org)

**21/64** Free and innovative tools to help your family have conversations about values and philanthropy. Also offer consulting services to families and family advisors. [www.2164.net](http://www.2164.net)

**generationOn** Geared toward children, includes ideas, tools, and hands-on ways to understand the issues in their communities—and to become part of the solution. <http://generationon.org>

**Learning to Give** Hundreds of free resources and lessons for parents and others to help educate youth about the importance of philanthropy and volunteerism. [www.learningtogive.org](http://www.learningtogive.org)

**National Center for Family Philanthropy** Promotes philanthropic values, vision, and excellence across generations of donors and donor families. Wonderful research and written resources for giving families. [www.ncfp.org](http://www.ncfp.org)

**Share Save Spend** Tools and resources to help parents teach their children healthy financial habits and values. [www.sharesavespend.com](http://www.sharesavespend.com)

## Publications

**Grandparent Legacy Project.** Includes interviews with a diverse group of philanthropic grandparents and a workbook to help you interview your family members.

[www.exponentphilanthropy.org](http://www.exponentphilanthropy.org)

**Raising Children With Philanthropic Values.** Offers practical guidance, perspectives, and action steps for parents who want to encourage charitable attitudes and behaviors in their children. [www.tpi.org](http://www.tpi.org)

**Strategic Uses of Donor Advised Funds.** Learn how to open a donor advised fund and how it can complement the private foundation vehicle. [www.exponentphilanthropy.org](http://www.exponentphilanthropy.org)

**The Best of Both Worlds: Using Private Foundations and Donor Advised Funds.**

For professional advisors, this guide describes the differences between private foundations and donor advised funds. [www.exponentphilanthropy.org](http://www.exponentphilanthropy.org)

***The Giving Book: Open the Door to a Lifetime of Giving.*** For young readers ages 6 to 11, this interactive book is filled with fun activities to help children record their ideas and wishes for the world. [www.wateringcanpress.com](http://www.wateringcanpress.com)

***The Giving Box: Create a Tradition of Giving With Your Children.*** Fred Rogers. Running Press, 2000 Offers children lessons in generosity and offers parents suggestions and practical guidelines to teach children compassion for others and the value of charity.

***The Giving Family: Raising Our Children to Help Others.*** Explains how parents, teachers, religious leaders, and other adults can instill the spirit of giving and volunteering in children. [www.cof.org](http://www.cof.org)

## Picture Books to Read With Young Children

***Giving.*** Shirley Hughes. Candlewick Press, 1993 A girl and her baby brother discover that giving is enjoyable, whether giving a present, a smile, or a kiss.

***My Most Favorite Thing.*** Nicola Moon. Dutton Children's Books, 2001 Katie lends her favorite stuffed bunny to her grandpa when his dog gets sick and has to stay at the pet hospital.

***Raising Yoder's Barn.*** Jane Yolen. Little, Brown, 1998 Eight-year-old Matthew tells what happens when fire destroys the barn on his family's farm and all the Amish neighbors come to rebuild it in one day.

***Ribbon Rescue.*** Robert Munsch. Scholastic, 1999 A young girl gives away the ribbons from her new dress to help various people on their way to a wedding.

***The Mitten Tree.*** Candace Christiansen. Fulcrum Kids, 1997 Old Sarah knits mittens for all the children waiting for the school bus and hangs them on the blue spruce tree at the bus stop.

***Uncle Willie and the Soup Kitchen.*** DyAnne DiSalvo-Ryan. Morrow Junior Books, 1991 A boy spends the day with Uncle Willie in the soup kitchen where he works preparing and serving food for the hungry.

## Chapter Books to Read With Young Children

**Aldo Ice Cream.** Johanna Hurwitz. Morrow, 1989 Nine-year-old Aldo discovers the pleasures of volunteering to help older citizens of the community and the satisfactions of earning his first money for unselfish reasons.

**Money Troubles.** Bill Cosby. Scholastic, 1998 While trying to raise money for a telescope, Little Bill makes a discovery about generosity and the needs of others.

**Seedfolks.** Paul Fleischman. HarperCollins, 1997 One by one, people of varying ages and backgrounds transform a trash-filled inner-city lot into a productive and beautiful garden, and in doing so the gardeners are themselves transformed.

*Excerpted from a list compiled by Brianne Williams, Youth Librarian, Multnomah County Library, Portland, Oregon.*

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