

GIVING BACK



This time of year, as we watch the last leaves fall to the ground and the night air chill, our thoughts turn to the time of year focused on giving thanks and giving back.

We are a community and a country blessed with a culture that values charitable giving and kindness to our neighbor. It is no secret that Americans are among the most generous in the world.

Person to person we actively choose to make a difference. We witness groups of like-minded individuals form charities and nonprofit organizations to make the community a more caring place. Some help animals, some help children, some feed the hungry and some respond to disasters, but each exists to fill a gap and lift others up when they experience difficult times. Leadership from people—everyday people like you and me—who step in to fill that void by gathering resources, both human and financial, to help address the problem.

As a registered nurse I saw a gap in our health care system 15 years ago. I understood that the best health care is self care, but found most people do not know how to live healthfully. They are unable to make informed decisions and think that their resulting poor health is just something to accept and live with. That mind-set concerned me and I knew that better health and a higher quality of life were a matter of better education surrounding nutrition and healthy living.

This was the gap I wanted to fill and so I founded the nonprofit Living Well Foundation which supports Camp Jump Start, a whole child health camp. This residential summer camp addresses and transforms the whole health of every camper - physical, emotional and social - bringing them improved health, happiness and hope for a better life. Kids leave camp having the skills to continue their success at home. In addition, this success has a ripple effect on their entire family. Our programs are intentionally impacting the obesity crisis and changing the face of health in the world today. We exist so no child will have adult disease and no one will die from preventable illness.

It is not easy to take on such an enormous societal issue. It takes mission driven people strategically planning a course of action to overcome each challenge. Resources must be found to carry out the plans and since most charities do not have major funders, they rely on the collective generosity of others. The generosity of people like you!

We have seen this spirit of kindness in some of our very own campers and seasonal staff.

Billy was only ten when he decided to raise money for Camp Jump Start. He knew what it meant to start our 4 week residential summer camp transforming from an overweight youngster, teased and isolated from his peers to a young man, determined to live a healthier lifestyle and feel pride in his progress. He wanted that for other kids so after school he started a dog walking service in his neighborhood. He wanted to do his part to raise money to help the camp that he said saved his life. His donation was \$8.75. I cannot tell you how his efforts touched all of us at Camp Jump Start.

And Billy is not alone. Alec, one of our college counselors, was so touched by his experience working with the camp that he made a \$10,000 donation from his college fund! He wanted to fund the need that he saw at the camp and give back for the life-changing experience he received that summer. He chose to put other's needs before his own so that camp would remain sustainable.

These are just two examples of giving back. Our country is known historically as a nation of people who share. This time of year, we are each called upon to "give back" or "pay it forward" in any way that we can so that when we are in need---as we all will be at some time in our life in one way or another---these nonprofit organizations will still exist to assist us and those we love.

This time of year we count our blessings, we give thanks and give gifts to those that matter to us. May we think outside of our inner circle this holiday season and



reach back to give a hand to those in need so they may step up or step around an obstacle in life.

Challenge yourself to find a cause and make the time to get involved and share your gifts of time, talent and treasure. I hope that you will pass it on to the children in your life as well. A great tradition for a lesson in philanthropy is to give your children a set amount of money as one of their gifts to donate to charity. Find three charities that touch your family and discuss each with your children. Then let them decide on the cause your family will support this year with their gift.

You and your family will receive more than you can possibly give because true happiness comes from being involved in something bigger than ourselves.

On behalf of all charities and nonprofit organizations I thank you for making the world a better place.

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