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Enriching your life in amazing ways

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How do you feel when you see positive impacts from your donations, serving on a scholarship committee, or mentoring students? What legacy can you build that others will follow? On the path to richness, literally and figuratively, giving to charity is an important step.

In this article, I'll share some pearls from a recent planned giving discussion, and encourage your continued dedication to your favorite charities. I trust you will continue to be rewarded in amazing ways.

At a time when it might be easy to say "not this time," Americans continue to be generous to charities. I haven't yet seen 2009 figures, but donations totaled \$307 billion in 2008 as reported by Giving USA. 62 million Americans volunteered for 8 billion hours of service, and one of the largest growing segments of volunteers is the 16-24 year age group.

Financial and non-financial benefits of giving include:

- Donors tend to be happier, and live longer
- Increase personal and national prosperity
- Forms stronger communities, promotes bonds among like-minded citizens, and helps sustain charities providing critical services
- Personal and active way for donors/volunteers to deliver effective, efficient and innovative benefits to those in need, rather than depending on the government

An intriguing question is "Why some people don't give?" Other than the few George Costanza types, and people wary of scams:

- Some people don't give much, but they give what they can – I recall a time at the hospital when we were comforting our then 6 year old daughter. A silver haired lady on a chair nearby reached over and handed her the biggest, shiniest nickel I'd ever seen. The intent often exceeds the dollar value.
- Others might be willing to give more, but feel they have less wealth and don't want to jeopardize their financial future. Wouldn't they benefit from greater education and confidence, especially in these uncertain times? Imagine the opportunities and impacts if they were shown that they had sufficient wealth prudently invested to provide them a lifetime (or longer) of cash flow. What if they could benefit from current tax savings, avoid capital gains taxes by gifting appreciated assets, and reduce estate taxes for their heirs?
- There are too many choices (there over 1.2 million US charities)... I need to be convinced why I should give to you. I want results and I want to be involved.

People do give. The reasons are numerous and include: "Makes me feel good," religious, personal experience, image, and tax savings. My advice is to meet with your financial, tax and estate experts, and your favorite charities. Identify what you can give, who you'd like to give to, and go make this world a better place. And it might not be a donation of your treasure. Gifts can include your other valuable assets... your time and talent.

As Bob Hope once said "If you haven't any charity in your heart, you have the worst kind of heart trouble."