

We need to cultivate a culture of kindness

By Nancy Long
Executive director, 501 Commons

When you visit WAGives.org, you will meet talented, dedicated people who stayed strong during uncertain times. Inside the hearts of these employees and volunteers is the steadfast belief that we can improve our communities and uplift the lives of others.

The causes that drive us may differ, but we all aspire to positively impact the world around us.

We hope to provide a sustainable environment for wildlife, access to parks and recreational opportunities, quality child care and enriching before/after school programs.

We want to lay our heads down at night knowing that no child went to bed hungry and no parent slept restlessly because of the fear of violence in their home.

We cherish the experience of music, art, film, dance and theatre transporting us to new cultures, experiences and perspectives.

We want others to have what we want for ourselves: health, happiness and opportunity.

Each year, 36% of us volunteer and 56% donate \$25 or more to charity. In your own way, you are likely doing something to improve your community or help a neighbor. You donate to the local food drive. You express gratitude to the health care workers who have risked their lives to care for you. By listening to someone describe their challenges, you show respect and a willingness to expand your point of view.

GiveBIG provides you with an easy way to give, volunteer, show gratitude and learn. Visit WAGives.org to find causes that speak to your aspirations for your community. You can:

- Search for organizations by location, city or county
- Filter by cause (such as education, animals, social ac-



COURTESY OF TRANSFAMILIES

tion, etc.)

- Choose organizations affiliated with BIPOC communities, LGBTQ+, veterans, seniors, immigrants and refugees, and more

- Find organizations that have matching funds so your dollars can go further.

When you explore the website, you will discover nonprofits such as Pioneer Human Services, which assists 10,000 people every year who are re-entering the workforce, many after incarceration. Learn about the work of TransFamilies, an organization serving transgender children, families and the professional community that supports them. Admire the resilience of the Skagit Habitat for Humanity, which has been helping people transform sweat equity into home equity for 27 years. Marvel at the unique habitat the chimps



COURTESY OF PAWS

enjoy at the Chimpanzee Sanctuary Northwest in Cle Elum.

The last two years have taught us many lessons. One is that nonprofits are amazingly well-managed, agile and resilient. GiveBIG organizations have had to spin gold from the straw of rapidly changing circumstances.

In many cases, the community needed them to do different things, and do what they did differently. Many organizations saw demand for their services explode beyond their available funds. Others saw their revenue streams vanish as performance venues and schools shut their doors. Like for-profit businesses, they have had to deal with higher costs, staff turnover, wage inflation and increased stress.

We estimate that 90% of Washington's nonprofits navigated these rough economic times without receiving any government money. While governments were willing to provide financial relief to most for-profit small businesses, little support was available to nonprofit small businesses. And despite this, only a handful of nonprofits

What is GiveBIG?

GiveBIG is a statewide fundraising campaign that culminates in a 48-hour giving event on May 3-4. Individuals and organizations come together across Washington to invest in our communities.

During last year's GiveBIG, nearly 72,000 donations were made to 1,684 nonprofits. Those donations — combined with donor-advised funds and IRA contributions, matching donations from individuals and companies, sponsors, and in-kind contributions from local media companies — totaled \$17.4 million.

went out of business.

Another lesson we learned is that we cannot take for granted that a culture of kindness will sustain itself in our communities and workplaces. We each need to cultivate and strengthen that culture. This is not a responsibility we can leave to others. We have to conduct ourselves with more humility, treat neighbors and co-workers with more consideration, and make fewer assumptions about people we only know as floating images in Zoom boxes.

We have to want to have a conversation, to listen, especially if we do not see eye to eye. It is easy to shun or dismiss people. It is more comfortable to fall silent rather than confront behavior that pigeonholes people and shuts them out. Instead, let's choose kindness.

You can start by giving generously — and urging others to join you — during GiveBIG on May 3-4.