



## PHILANTHROPIST. IT'S NOT A BIG WORD. IT'S YOU!

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By Gail Baer

When we consider the word “philanthropist,” we often picture someone older with extreme financial wealth. Although this is certainly one type of philanthropist, the truth is... anyone can be a philanthropist because we all have the ability to care about and give something of ourselves to others.

The word “philanthropy” comes from the Greek word “Philos” meaning “love” and “Anthropos” meaning “man” or “humanity.” Literally, in the original Greek meaning, the word philanthropy is the “love of humanity.” Today, philanthropy means generosity of all kinds, often referring to giving the gift of “time, talent or treasure” to help repair our world.

You can be a philanthropist by making a monetary gift to a cause you believe in and want to support. You can also practice philanthropy by giving your time—serving meals at a local shelter, tutoring a teen or engaging in any other volunteer activity that aims to improve lives. Anyone who exhibits these behaviors, regardless of how many resources (or how few) that person has, is indeed a “philanthropist.”

A great start to becoming a philanthropist is volunteering. According to a [recent study](#) by Fidelity Charitable, volunteering your time and giving financial support often go hand-in-hand. The study found that nearly two-thirds of individuals who make a charitable contribution to an organization are also recent volunteers. Before the pandemic began,

62 percent of philanthropic individuals had recently volunteered for a charitable organization, indicating their interest in providing more than financial support for their favorite causes.

Nonprofit organizations rely on the generosity and financial support of the community to do the work we do. As a philanthropy professional, it is my mission to connect individuals and families with their community passions. The magic happens when a donor sees, feels and understands that their gift—no matter what size—has the ability to change another person’s life for the better. The nonprofit community needs the financial support of donors at all giving levels. It’s not about how much you give rather about why and how you give. Because generosity transforms lives.

Every donor is a valued donor. We are grateful for any amount of financial support we receive from the community. Think about it. A \$10 monthly gift given regularly over a lifetime equals thousands of dollars. That monthly donor is just as valuable to us as a \$10,000 one-time donor. The important thing here is to give what you can.

How do you get started on your philanthropy journey? What are you passionate about? What issues or social causes are important to you? There are so many worthwhile organizations in our community that focus on critical community concerns as health and well-being, social services, education, food insecurity, environment, animal welfare, to name a few. You may already have some ideas but if you need some inspiration, the Alliance for Arizona Nonprofits has a searchable database that is a great place to start, <https://www.azgives.org/>.

Consider creating an annual philanthropy plan. This plan allows you to make changes over time as your personal financial situation changes and can be a very powerful tool to help you narrow and deepen your focus. Identify one to three organizations addressing issues that mean something to you. Treat your philanthropy plan like a personal giving budget. This will allow you to consolidate your giving and make a greater impact.

When developing your philanthropy plan, be honest with yourself. Are you giving to your capacity? Are you as generous as you can be? Remember that your gift is a part of lasting change that can transform lives. Think about it as your personal investment in changing the world for the better. And like any good investment, it is essential to know and understand the organizations you will be supporting. Schedule time with the organization’s donor relations team to learn more about the organization, perhaps take a tour and find some time to volunteer at a program. Does the organization’s mission align with your values and beliefs? A face-to-face meeting and even a tour is a great first step in identifying if it’s a good match.

We all have a collective responsibility to heal our world. Be a philanthropist and take that first important step on your journey.



*Gail Baer is the vice president of philanthropic services for Jewish Family & Children’s Service (JFCS). JFCS is a non-profit, non-sectarian organization that strengthens the community by providing behavioral health, healthcare and social services to all ages, faiths and backgrounds. JFCS’ goal is for a future where families are strong, elders are cared for and children are safe. The dedication to the mission is strengthened by a commitment to core Jewish values that honor community and the continuity of the generations. More information about JFCS and ways to support the organization’s mission is available at [www.jfcsaz.org](http://www.jfcsaz.org).*