



Gift-Givers Anonymous

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WE'VE ALL HAD SHOCKING SELF-REVELATIONS. Mine came in my early thirties when I finally had to concede: I am a lousy gift-giver. That long-delayed admission came one chilly Christmas Day when the presents I put under the tree received (yet again) an even chillier reception from my family members. When my mother said, "Really, honey, you shouldn't have," I finally heard it. Really. You. Shouldn't. Have. Ever. Again.



My first thought was to join a support group for lousy gift-givers. But, I knew the group would immediately toss me out without a smidgeon of sympathy when they learned a deluxe Keurig coffeemaker, pair of tickets to *Wicked* at the Wang and a Nintendo wii home video game console had landed me there.

The truth is, I give lovely gifts, thoughtful gifts. I actually thought my parents would enjoy a more active lifestyle playing tennis in the living room. I truly believed they would have a wicked good time taking in a Broadway performance. And, I knew deep down in my heart they would eventually grow to love one exquisitely brewed cup of coffee at a time. Turns out, they wanted gift cards.

Last month, we were on a site visit with a local nonprofit. We had given the organization a sizeable grant for a very exciting and innovative program. Talk turned to future needs and desires. Be honest, I said. "Well, I wasn't going to bring this up," the ED replied, "because it's not something funders are usually interested in." Turns out they needed a more sophisticated system for their financials and accounting. They didn't think the need had enough sizzle for a funder. (Kind of like a generic Home Depot gift card.)

Remember, that old Maine saying? "You can't get there from here." Nonprofits need solid infrastructures to get where they're going. And, too often, we as funders and donors don't get excited about contributing to the "basic and bland." We focus on opportunities that are new or innovative and sometimes overlook ways to help nonprofits expand their impact by running their organizations more efficiently to better scale their programs to serve more. Sometimes, bigger is not better. Sometimes more is just more.

Recently, the Bridgespan Group, a national management consulting firm to nonprofits and philanthropists, partnered in a study with the estimable Ford Foundation. The group reported that over 50% of the 300 Ford Foundation

grantees examined were not financially stable enough to continue running their programs effectively for the long-term. To give you some perspective, if you combine the spending of our nation's top 15 foundations, these Ford Foundation grantees account for one-third of it. Wow. If some of the country's mightiest, economically-fueled nonprofits are facing these challenges, imagine what might be happening here on the local level.

That's why, the leadership team at The Cape Cod Foundation has been taking a different, strategic approach to our discretionary fundraising and funding. Over the next few months, we'll tell you more about the five nonprofits who received this year's Strategic Focus Grants. We'll start with Duffy Health Center, who received \$15,000 for a web-based technology tool that will improve their internal efficiency and patient care and compliancy with state mandates. We are also helping to fund the Cape Housing Partnership, a strategic approach to educating our community about affordable housing. These capacity-building initiatives, detailed below, will help the organizations serve the community better, longer.

Although the holidays are three months away, my shopping will be a cinch. I'm giving the whole fam-damly gift cards again. It's what they need; it's what they want. However, if you would like some thoughtful, gift-giving advice to help you power up your Cape Cod legacy and the nonprofits in our community, give me a call. I can definitely help you make a difference.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kristin', with a stylized, cursive script.

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