

# FIND YOUR PASSION

## THINK ABOUT THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

If you're reading this, we've convinced you that you can be a philanthropist. Now what? How do you find a cause you want to support? How do I find my perfect match organization? Use this guide to narrow your passions into causes you can support through philanthropy!



You may want to jot down your answers.

Who has helped you in the past? You don't have to limit yourself to monetary help.

*Examples: Alumni scholarships, tutoring, mentoring from an experienced co-worker*

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How have you helped, in ways other than giving money, in the past?

*Examples: volunteering, advocacy*

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Do you currently donate money? What causes have you supported in the past?

*If you're like many Millennials, you have probably donated based on a quick decision or a request from a friend. In fact, 42% of Millennials give to "whatever inspires them at the moment" There's nothing wrong with this and understanding your motivation for giving is important!*

2012 Millennial Impact Report

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Why do you give? Have you had any life experience that have shaped the causes you feel strongest about supporting?

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You've explored your philanthropic identity, now get to know two Average Jo(e)s for whom philanthropy has become a big part of their lives.

## JASON'S STORY – “BEING A PHILANTHROPIST IS PART OF MY IDENTITY.”

Jason, a member of the NextGen Giving Circle, sees philanthropy as a way to repay the generosity he has received throughout his life. Service has always been a priority to Jason. However, it was not until he was a college student that he realized the importance of donating money in addition to time. His junior year, Jason embarked on a project to bring together a vibrant community of changemakers from other local universities. Thanks to the generosity of alumni of his school and program, Jason received grants to make his work possible. Now that he is in a position to support new initiatives, it is important for him to return the favor. In addition to contributing to the NextGen Giving Circle, Jason donates money to his alma mater, religious organizations, and a colleague who has successfully launched a nonprofit in the education field.



## MARISSA'S STORY – “GIVING 1% IS JUST PART OF WHAT I DO”

Marissa was raised in a family where service and philanthropy were valued and she subsequently chose a career in the nonprofit sector. She felt that she was doing her part to give to those in need through her job in education, annual donations to several causes she cared about and her participation in the NextGen Giving Circle. However, when her brother was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis in November 2007, Marissa felt the need to do more. Knowing that there was nothing they could do to change his diagnosis, Marissa and her family embarked on a fundraising campaign for the Denver MS Walk. It was a transformative experience for her to partner with other people who shared her family's mission of finding a cure and to realize the power of the group's collective efforts. Marissa has been recognized as a top fundraiser in the Colorado-Wyoming region every year since she took up the cause and her team of family and friends, Down with Disease, has raised more than \$125,000 in just six years. In addition to her commitment to funding MS research, Marissa is still an active member of the NextGen Giving Circle. She appreciates that some of her philanthropic dollars support organizations that she otherwise would not have been exposed to, but loves learning about the exciting work that they are doing to make a difference across the country and around the globe. Her experiences with OPF and the National MS Society have made her a more informed and intentional donor.



## HOW DO I MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN AREAS I FEEL PASSIONATE ABOUT?

**What are the causes you feel strongest about?** What things get you excited? Is it finding cures for disease, primary education or providing clean water? Make a list of a few things that are important to you:

*Adapted from [Where Do You Give?](#)*

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**Which geographic regions do you want to fund?** Some people feel strongest about making a donation in their hometown, while others want to support communities abroad. Make a list of the regions you feel strongest about supporting:

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Now that you've identified issues and geographic areas you feel strongly about, it's time to figure out how you want to help. There are different strategies organizations use to affect change and some organizations engaged in more than one strategy.

## I WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THESE ISSUES AND HOW TO HELP! WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?



### Raw Data

Education: [National Center for Education Statistics](#)  
International Aid: [World Bank](#), [CIA World Factbook](#)  
Poverty: [American Community Survey](#)  
Health: [HealthData.gov](#)  
Environment: [EPA Data Finder](#),  
[Energy Information Agency](#)

### Policy and Current Research

*Think Tanks*  
[Brookings Institute](#) (range of topics)  
[Pew Charitable Trusts](#) (range of topics)  
[Urban Institute](#) (poverty)  
[Kaiser Family Foundation](#) (health)  
[Carnegie Endowment for Peace](#) (international issues)  
*New ideas in the field*  
[Ted Talks](#)

## THERE'S SO MUCH INFORMATION! WHAT THINGS IN PARTICULAR SHOULD I FOCUS ON?

The scope of an issue - Is it national, regional, or local?

Current efforts to address the problem

Promising solutions

Ways of contributing to a solution:

- Direct service: Provides for the immediate needs of the community it serves
- Technical assistance and training: Provides technical services to help people better their own lives
- Education and research: Advances society's knowledge about important issues
- Political or legal advocacy: Influences government representatives to change policy or brings cases to court

# FIND YOUR PASSION

## POP QUIZ!

Match the organization's activities with their strategy to change the world:



- |                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| A. Direct Service           | 1. Think tanks, medical research labs                |
| B. Technical Assistance     | 2. Meeting with congressmen, bringing cases to court |
| C. Education/Research       | 3. Homeless shelter, soup kitchen                    |
| D. Political/Legal Advocacy | 4. Job training, professional development classes    |

For each issue you identified above, which strategy do you want to support? If you feel strongest about reading in your community, would you prefer to give to an organization advocating for more education funding or an after-school tutoring program? When researching organizations to donate to or nominate for grants, keep in mind your personal preferences about not only issue and region, but also the organization's strategy for change.

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Philanthropy is incredibly personal and everyone has different values and experiences that shape their priorities for giving. Congratulations on digging deep to figure out just what causes you want to support. Now that you know where and how you want to give, you're ready to learn how to make sure an organization is worthy of your donation!



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