



## Neil D. Steinberg: At this season, help R.I. organizations help your neighbors

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By NEIL D. STEINBERG

They are local heroes, unsung for the most part: staff, board members and volunteers of hundreds of local nonprofit organizations found in every community in our state, working tirelessly to provide direct services in health, education, the arts, the environment, human services and economic development.

As the holiday season shifts into high gear, these organizations experience firsthand the pressure of a Rhode Island economy that continues to be challenged even as it makes a slow recovery from “The Great Recession.” They serve Rhode Islanders with the greatest need and often the least visibility.



A soup kitchen in Providence

Journal archives

From soup kitchens to job training programs, from community health centers to homeless shelters, from after-school arts programs for underserved youth to fuel-assistance, nonprofit organizations weave a supportive tapestry, providing direct, immediate assistance to those Rhode Islanders — our neighbors — facing the toughest situations with little to celebrate.

Now is the time for those of us who have more than we need — and who are indebted to our community for the many opportunities afforded to us — to share with those who do not have enough.

Giving to organizations that serve people in need is more than just an act of good will; it will, however, certainly make you feel good. And charitable contributions are tax-deductible to a certain extent. But there is more to giving than that.

Most of us understand that taxes are necessary to fund services provided by our government. Yet imagine if you could actually prioritize and direct where and how those dollars are expended. There is a way: Donate to nonprofit causes, organizations and programs that match your passions.

The Rhode Island Foundation, one of more than 700 community foundations nationwide, is dedicated to meeting the needs of the people of Rhode Island. And we are fortunate to be able to

help. This year alone we will make grants in excess of \$25 million. In the past decade, we've contributed more than \$240 million. And while most of our grant-making is focused on long-term solutions to persistent challenges, our year-end emergency community grants of \$300,000 to 12 organizations is helping these groups to immediately reach more than 100,000 Rhode Islanders, providing food, shelter, and energy assistance and medicine.

Our generous donors, who share our love for the state, make our investments in Rhode Island possible. The need, however, continues to increase.

As you consider your own ability and inclination to give in this season, and as you think about your passions, ask yourselves these questions:

Do you want the best public schools in the U.S.?

Do you want the best primary health care in the in the country?

Do you want affordable housing available to all Rhode Islanders?

Do you want job-training programs that actually put people to work for the long term?

Do you want to preserve our quality of place, our clean air and water?

Do you want arts and culture to thrive?

Do you want a reasonable and effective safety net for those in dire need?

Do you want to make a positive impact? Do you want to see results?

If you answered “yes” to any of the questions above, now — in challenging times — is the time to be generous, to stretch, to support the mission-driven nonprofit organizations making a difference in each of these critical areas.

We know brighter days are ahead, just not when. We know there are many leaders and engaged citizens who have worked and will continue to work to get the state back on track and moving in a positive direction. So in this current time of great need and holiday celebration, let's step it up. If you have the means, celebrate success by giving others hope. Challenge yourselves to give back and pay forward. If you earned it, give some back. Remember the helping hands you had along the way. If you already give, please contribute more.

If you want positive results, sustained growth, and a brighter future, invest in Rhode Island and Rhode Islanders by supporting the organizations that have a chance to effect real change — now.

Neil D. Steinberg is president and CEO of the Rhode Island Foundation.