

Nancy Schick Skinner

# Giving Back



Serving coffee to client Allan Jackson

**T**he measure of my success is not how much money I can accumulate, but how much good I can do for others.

Life has been good to me. I feel I must give back to the community in gratitude. Money cannot buy the feeling of satisfaction and inner warmth derived from donating time and/or funds to charities and individuals in need of assistance.

I believe giving is in all of us. There are many different ways we can make a difference in our world.

Having the good fortune to possess sufficient funds to make monetary donations makes it easier to give back, but there are many ways to make a difference.

The “Penny Girl,” a teenager from Vancouver Island, has recently been named to the Order of British Columbia for her fantastic fundraising efforts. This young teen was diagnosed with Neurofibromatosis at the age of 3; she has undergone numerous painful surgeries and chemotherapy and continues to require treatment.

Young Jeneece Edroff started her fundraising by collecting pennies at age 7 to assist Variety Club – The Children’s Charity, that had helped her

family with her medical expenses. With her strong spirit and determination, she has been successful in raising \$1.5 million to assist various children’s charities.

In Jeneece’s words, “I am a bit like a penny. By myself, I am not worth much, but with a little help and lots of pennies, you can achieve a lot. Every penny counts, and even the smallest person can make a difference.”

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On the other end of the giving-back pendulum are Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett who have challenged other billionaires to pledge at least half their net worth to charity—during their lifetimes or at death.

Bill and Melinda Gates are currently leading by example. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has distributed billions of dollars globally in the developing world, with a focus on improving health and reducing extreme poverty, and in the US, on assisting those in need in a multitude of ways. Improving the accessibility of a high school education for all students, with

hopes of going on to university is very important to the Gates.

Melinda says, “I don’t think money makes you happy. I think the converse is true. With money comes great responsibility; ours is to make sure that this goes back to society.”

Locally, Rick Hansen, who at age 15 sustained a spinal cord injury (SCI) in a car accident, paralyzing him from the waist down, has turned his misfortune into an extreme example of how anyone can give back. Over the past 25 years, his mantra of “anything is possible” and his passion *to make a difference* has resulted in an international shift in consciousness in the belief of the potential of people with disabilities.

His “Man in Motion” 1985 tour raised \$26 million as he wheeled 40,000 kilometres through 34 countries. His Rick Hansen Foundation has helped generate \$200 million for SCI research and quality-of-life programs. He continues to fundraise and raise international awareness to attain his goal to find a cure for SCI and make the world fully accessible and inclusive for everyone.

The long list of celebrities such as Bono and George Clooney, who are giving their time and money for the benefit of others locally and globally, certainly sends a strong statement on the importance of giving back.

But you need not have a lot of money or even a high profile to assist others. Volunteers prepare and serve food to the hungry, erect houses for Habitat for Humanity, care for injured animals and birds, and assist with sports teams; they are the backbone of many charitable and nonprofit organizations.

Statistics Canada has not done an extensive survey since 2004, but at that time they determined that the top quarter of volunteers—11 percent of Canadians who contributed 180 hours or more—accounted for 77 percent of total volunteer hours. The survey indicated that 45 percent of British Columbians reported volunteering in 2004, with an average of 168 volunteer hours each that year. That is only 14 hours a month, but it does make a difference.

In many cases, their unselfish efforts allow our community to offer programs and benefits that would not be possible without the volunteers' time.

Personally, I have volunteered and participated in many aspects of community service for as long as I can remember. At age 4, my mother took me weekly to the local church to make cancer dressings. The kind volunteers made me believe that I, too, was helping. The good feeling of giving back has remained with me.

As a youngster, I accompanied my mother, canvassing door-to-door for Mother's March, Cancer, and Heart and Stroke. In my teens, I canvassed on my own for those charities and any others that asked for help, and I taught Sunday school and volunteered to assist the elderly.

Throughout my adult years, I have found many ways to make a difference. To list a few, I served on the Board of the Canadian Cancer Society and Richmond's Gateway Theatre, canvassed for various charities, taught beading to teenage girls, mentored parents with mentally ill teens, and maintained a long term membership in Richmond Sunrise Rotary, participating in a multitude of fundraising projects that created local and international benefits.



For the past 2 years, to contribute to the Realtor's local blanket and jacket drive, I have handknit 50 scarves and my mother has knitted toques. Most recently, I was

instrumental in organizing donations of clothing and household items for local tenants who lost everything in the total destruction of an apartment building by fire.

A local Realtor jumped on board and got her entire office to participate; my clients were more than generous, as well. Quite often, people want to help. They just need to be given the opportunity.

Another part of our community quite often overlooked is the elderly, especially if they do not have local family members. At present, I have three wonderful retired clients that my sons and I assist by taking them to medical appointments and shopping and basically ensuring they are living in a safe and healthy environment.

The preceding activities demonstrate ways I have found to give my time to make a difference but I also donate money annually to every major charity and numerous smaller nonprofit organizations because I can and because I want to.

Most individuals don't donate their time and or their money for public acknowledgement. The fact that many

organizations, government agencies, and charities give recognition to corporations and individuals that do make a difference speaks for the gratitude our society has for such actions and serves to promote the idea of giving back.

I am proud to be the first recipient of The Society of Notaries' President's Award in appreciation for service to the community "Beyond the Call of Duty" and to have received Rotary International's Paul Harris Award for outstanding community service. Those and other recognitions, such as being chosen in the Richmond Chamber of Commerce Awards of Excellence for outstanding customer service, certainly complement the inner feelings of satisfaction I cherish from serving others.

From a business aspect, the recognition plaques and awards on my office wall declare to my clients that their Notary Public sincerely cares.

A smile costs no extra time or money and is the most effective way to reach others. My smile given to everyone I meet not only rebounds back to me, it ripples on to others, creating warmth and washing away woes. Everyone deserves a smile.

The opportunities to give back are endless. Give a little or give a lot, but please give.

We can all make a difference. In and out of the office. Just ask "how can I help"? ▲

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*With long-time client and friend Joe Fruehauff*