

# Nonprofit organizations rely on holiday donations to carry them into new year

If Black Friday was the start of the holiday shopping season, nonprofit leaders hope that today marks the beginning of a month of donations to carry their efforts through the end of the year.

Since 2012, the Tuesday following Thanksgiving has been celebrated as #GivingTuesday, an online and social media movement to fundraise for worthy causes after many people have spent several days buying gifts for friends, family and themselves.

“It’s a day you can concentrate on what you have to give, what you want to give and making it happen,” said Bet Savich, director of the Bloomington Volunteer Network, which compiles the city’s Holiday Wish List. “Good intentions are great, but you have to do something about them.”

Created by the 92nd Street Y, a cultural center in New York City, and the United Nations Foundation, #GivingTuesday has expanded to much more than a social media hashtag. In 2014, 68 countries participated in #GivingTuesday, raising \$45.68 million for 35,000 nonprofit organizations, according to Indiana University’s Lilly Family School of Philanthropy and the Case Foundation.

“It reminds us of the obligations, the importance of giving to charity at a time when many of us are going to do that anyway,” said Leslie Lenkowsky, a professor of practice in public affairs and philanthropy at IU’s School of Public and Environmental Affairs.

In Bloomington, Mayor Mark Kruzan has proclaimed Dec. 1, 2015, as #GivingTuesday, and nonprofit organizations such as Susie’s Place are directing donors online to support their programs, such as Susie’s Place’s new therapy dog initiative.

Susie’s Place, a child advocacy center that conducts forensic interviews in cases of suspected child abuse and provides children and family support services, is using #GivingTuesday to introduce potential donors to Niko, a collie trained to work with child victims of sexual assault and children with post-traumatic stress disorder.

“We’re trying to really tailor the campaign to something that is concrete and people can connect with and hopefully will be moved by,” said Emily Perry, executive director of Susie’s Place. “When you’re giving unto others, you are receiving that gift of giving, yourself.”

Online donations on #GivingTuesday have increased about 470 percent since 2012, the 92nd Street Y reported. But only a fraction of annual charitable donations come via the Internet. In 2014, 6.7 percent of total nonprofit organization fundraising came from online giving, according to Blackbaud, a software company that tracks and analyzes #GivingTuesday activity for the 92nd Street Y.

“Most donations still occur the old-fashioned way,” Lenkowsky said. “People write checks or they put money into the Salvation Army bucket.”

It’s also difficult for philanthropy experts to determine if #GivingTuesday donations are a bonus to fundraising that typically increases for nonprofits during the holiday season, or if these online contributions replace what would otherwise be donations made throughout the month, Lenkowsky said.

“A lot of very small nonprofits may not have a great Web presence, so Giving Tuesday, which is very Web driven, is not necessarily the best way they can raise funds,” he said. “What they lose by not having an effective Web presence is probably not as important as having people in their own communities who know about them and want to support them.”

For nonprofit Girls Inc., this means getting creative to maximize online and in-person donations. Last #GivingTuesday, Girls Inc., a United Way agency that provides after-school programming and summer camps, partnered with 10 local businesses that could commit to donating a portion of their daily profits to the organization.

These retailers and restaurants provided customers with additional information about donating or getting involved with Girls Inc. After thanking customers for their purchases, workers at the Laughing Planet Cafe also asked every restaurant patron, “Do you know about Girls Inc.?”

“That’s ultimately the goal we would have for all of them, is to get them that involved and that active,” said Kristi McCann, executive director of Girls Inc. of Monroe County. “It’s been a fun experience, and it’s a great opportunity for us to really be able to let the community know who we are.”

Charitable giving tends to increase at the end of the year, Lenkowsky said, and United Way has previously seen an uptick in its donations around #GivingTuesday, said Jenn Hottell, community engagement director of United Way of Monroe County.

This is followed by several months of low donations, Perry and McCann said, which means the donations made on #GivingTuesday have to sustain nonprofits through the beginning of 2016.

“This is the month we have to raise enough money to carry us through quarter one,” Perry said.

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[Bloomington Volunteer Network Holiday Wish List](#)