

Brattleboro Reformer

Celebrate 'Giving Day'

By **MARTIN COHN**

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Rather than Black Friday, how about declaring the day after Thanksgiving as Giving Day, a day to encourage philanthropy. In this way, all Vermonters would be encouraged to offer assistance to those in need, in whatever way they may be able to do so. It's a simple idea to associate charitable giving and the celebration of philanthropy with our national holiday of Thanksgiving.

Recent disasters have proven that lending support to those in need is an important part of our Vermont tradition, and the American tradition. The holiday season provides an occasion to remind us of all that we have to be grateful for, and it should also serve to remind us to continue to be aware of the needs of others who may be struggling and in need of assistance.

As Vermonters already know, helping others may be done in many ways -- donations of funds, food or individual help; giving of our time to individuals or groups who struggle to meet necessary daily needs; and volunteering service to non-profit and community organizations to assist their efforts are among the ways in which we can give to others.

Giving Day gives us an opportunity to think about what is important to us and how we can give. We can give to a cause that means something to us -- an issue that our passion connects to, a community need that tugs at our heartstrings, an organization we know that does good work. Giving Day is a day when people across the state can celebrate the power and passion of their philanthropy. You can participate by:

- Making a Giving Day commitment to support your favorite cause with a gift of time or money;
- Expressing your values, compassion and passions with friends and family by discussing issues that matter to you;
- Building a new tradition by encouraging others to celebrate Giving Day.
- Making a Giving Day commitment to support your favorite cause with a gift of time or money.
- Celebrating Thanksgiving! Whether it's in quiet, personal conversations, a rousing round-the-table discussion, or an eloquent toast, take a moment to talk about issues that matter to you and your Giving

Day commitment -- and encourage others to do the same.

-- Expressing your values, compassion and passions with friends and family by discussing ways in which to support the causes that matter to you. Have a dinner party to discuss what you can do collectively to make a difference in your community.

-- Teaching your children about giving by agreeing on a family gift to a non-profit or through activities that teach giving

-- Planning your legacy by creating your will.

-- Gathering with friends to create a giving circle where you decide on a group gift that leverages your individual donations into one large one.

-- Investigating The Vermont Community Foundation (Phone: 802-388-3355). They can offer you information on local non-profits and ways to get philanthropically involved;

-- Signing up for a regular volunteer opportunity.

-- Serving on a non-profit board. Bring your knowledge and know how to help guide a local non-profit. Check out your local United Way for organizations looking for board members.

Giving Day provides everyone -- those directly touched by tragedy and those who want so much to help -- with a concrete action that makes the world a better place. We can talk with friends and family about the things we care about, the causes we support and what we want for the future. By starting small -- gathering with relatives to volunteer or combining charitable gifts with friends at work -- each of us can help make a bigger difference.

This holiday season, we have much to be grateful for and, with the downturn in the economy, we also know that giving is more important than ever this year. Help is needed more when times are harder. The best reason to give in a down economy is because that's when it does the most good.

The same slump that makes it harder for some to keep up their charitable giving makes it harder for others to put food on the table and keep hope in their lives. Hard times strain families at every seam. Charitable giving helps keep them from coming apart.

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