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# Newsletter

Giving Season Issue

November 2007

Which donors will make the difference?



Reach generous donors through the **GivingExpress®** program from American Express...

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Welcome to the 2007 giving season issue of the GuideStar Newsletter. This issue is brought to you by the GivingExpress® program from American Express.

## New Survey Looks at Giving from a Different Angle

*Big gifts get the headlines, but smaller donations make the philanthropic world go round.*

A new survey by American Express and conducted in September 2007 has taken a different approach to examining the philanthropic habits of American donors. By looking at individual gifts on a national scale rather than annual donation amounts, the American Express Charitable Gift Survey—conducted in partnership with the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University—offers an intriguing look at how much is given in a single transaction, the differences between on-line and off-line gifts, and the motivations that lead donors to choose one method of giving over the other.

Although the survey did not find any significant differences between the average amounts of donations made on-line and off-line, it did reveal that a large number of these charitable transactions involved small amounts of money. Of the more than 900 gifts reported in the survey, more than two-thirds represented donations of \$100 or less. In fact, the study found that the median charitable donation is \$50. ... [Read more](#)

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## The Story of the Gold Toes: The Best-Kept Holiday Fundraising Secret

*Everyone is asking for money right now—so how do you stand out? Check your sock drawer for the answer.*

Open your sock drawer and look inside. I am willing to bet that if you're a man, you'll own at least one pair of Gold Toes. Those are the dress socks with the distinctive gold thread at the toe. If you're a woman, you may have a pair of white work-out socks with that gold color on the toes. The odds are in my favor because more than half of all men's socks sold at U.S. department stores are the Gold Toe brand, and the company weaves more than 140 million pairs for men, women, and children every year.

Why does Gold Toe hold such a strong position in the market? Because it has a clear competitive advantage. In the consumer's mind, Gold Toe stands for quality and durability. Gold Toe socks don't get little holes at the toe after you wear them a few times, nor do they lose their elasticity and start sagging around the ankles after a few washes. ... [Read more](#)

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## Misconceptions about Writing Fundraising Letters

*Want to write more effective fundraising letters? Throw out (most of) the rule book.*

One of the most crippling misconceptions about letter writing is that it's hard and something to labor over. Not so. The secret to writing effective fundraising letters is to write quickly and naturally. To let the words flow from your fingers, to talk a "blue streak" on paper.

We're wary of people who choose their words too carefully, and we seldom vote for political candidates who appear to be "thinking" while they're speaking. Donors write checks because they feel a personal and comfortable connection with your organization, and that starts with your writing. ... [Read more](#)

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## Is Mobile Fundraising the Next Frontier for Charities?

*Organizations around the world are using mobile phone technology in their fundraising campaigns. Find out what it means for American nonprofits.*

The numbers speak for themselves: there are currently 236 million cell phone users in the United States—an astounding 76 percent penetration. In December of last year alone, 18.7 billion text messages were sent—up 92 percent from 9.7 billion in December 2005. Estimates predict 195 billion text messages sent in 2007. That is 600 million text messages a day.

Needless to say, fundraisers and nonprofits are salivating at the potential of reaching all of these people where they are, at the moment they are moved by a cause, and when they are able to GIVE—with their thumbs. ... [Read more](#)

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