



PULSE

Go-go do good

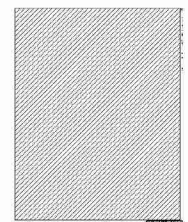
Spend a little, give a lot: our holiday volunteer package

Caroline Brachfeld whips up a mushroom ragout for the homeless.

By CARA O'FLYNN

TIS (almost) the season for the holidays — and with it, a big ol' helping of guilt — the self-imposed kind. You'd love to do more to help people, really. You feel bad that you don't (honest!) but most of the time, it's hard enough to schedule time for friends, let alone pencil in complete strangers. So that's why we're making it really, really easy. Whether you can spare an afternoon, an hour, a few minutes, or a mouse click, you can do good and feel good this season.

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Printed and distributed by NewspaperDirect

While the giving is good

AN AFTERNOON OR EVENING

WHAT: While some of us are dining on \$85 mac and cheese (cough . . . *Waverly Inn!*), 1.3 million New Yorkers are living in homes without enough to eat. But you can have your exorbitant mac and eat it, too — by helping out the New York City Coalition Against Hunger, which coordinates 1,200 soup kitchens and food pantries. Just a few hours of your time can make a real impact in the community.

HOW: Visit nyccah.org to find agencies that need assistance preparing, delivering and serving meals — or put your business savvy to use with skills like research, grant writing or accounting.

WHAT: For the homebound elderly, the holidays can be the loneliest time of year — even in a city of 8 million people. Through Citymeals-on-Wheels, you can deliver nutritious meals to their homes — and spend some time with someone who really needs it. Bonus: Getting to see other people's apartments. (Oh, don't pretend you're not curious.)

HOW: Visit citymeals.org for a list of senior centers with holiday volunteer programs.

WHAT: Have you ever mended baby clothes? Neither have we! But with projects ranging from teaching English to children to playing board games with hospitalized stroke victims, New York Cares offers endless opportunities to help

improve fellow New Yorkers' lives. Many are just a few hours on evenings and weekends. "We add extra projects this time of year to accommodate as many volunteers as we can," says Colleen Farrell, senior director of communications.

HOW: Go to nycare.org to search for opportunities based on your interest, location and availability.

ONE OR TWO LUNCH HOURS

WHAT: Help an immigrant or newcomer to the country get a leg up by tutoring them in English. You'll be helping them out — and who knows? While you're revisiting grammar rules, you might even relearn a thing or two yourself!

HOW: Visit literacyvolunteers.org to receive more information.

WHAT: Gifts are great, but they're not a given for the many families who don't have money for presents this December. You can make this holiday special for someone by participating specifically in the "Winter Wishes" program.

HOW: Visit nycare.org before Nov. 30 to register for a gift request from a needy child, teen or family member.

FIVE MINUTES ON THE INTERNET

WHAT: The combination of chocolate and charity is pretty awesome, if you ask us. [Bake Me a Wish's](http://BakeMeaWish.com) "Project Wish Cake" supports the Make-a-Wish Foundation by donating 30 percent of each chocolate mousse torte cake purchase

(\$39.95).

HOW: Visit bakemeawish.com, where you can order one for someone on your holiday shopping list — or, um, for yourself.

WHAT: Give the gift of . . . animals (and we're not talking about bow-laden puppies!). It might sound strange, but as it turns out, you can help struggling families feed themselves — and develop businesses that create long-term income. You can send someone a heifer that produces 4 gallons of milk a day (\$50 a share), honeybees that pollinate flowers and produce honey (\$30), or a flock of chicks that provide eggs (\$20).

HOW: Sign up for Heifer International's holiday registry at heifer.org.

WHAT: In a city of (more than) plenty, it's sometimes hard to imagine the level of need that exists here and elsewhere. But the best thing about DonorsChoose is that you don't have to be bringing in big bucks to give — you can give \$50 or \$5000! This is a national organization that helps fund projects in the public schools that need it most. Teachers can post everything from the need for a class set of dictionaries (\$150) to a class field trip to the Supreme Court (\$2000).

HOW: Visit donorschoose.org and decide how much you want to donate. Then take a look at the items that have been posted by teachers and click to contribute.

WHAT: Sometimes it's the simplest things that

count. Next time you're stumped for a gift for mom or dad, think about giving a gift in their name. That's what you can do with World Vision's Gift Catalog, where you can give a variety of gifts to people across the world who really need them. Some couples are even opting for this in lieu of having people purchase gifts off their wedding registry! For a nominal amount (\$16) you can send two soccer balls to a school where children have never seen a real toy — let alone ever had money to purchase gym supplies. For \$35, you can sponsor part of a girl's education for a year, or a community will plant ten fruit trees to boost health and income level in an impoverished town (\$60.)

HOW: Go to World Vision's Gift Catalog (worldvisiongifts.org) and choose which item you'd like to contribute.

SWEET CHARITY

IN the mood for still more volunteering? Here's how.

1. Help a soldier have a good holiday; check out anysoldier.com to buy items off their wish lists.
2. Before you make another click, check out goodshop.com. This site makes your online purchases more meaningful by donating a percentage of the sale to charity.
3. Getting a new laptop for Christmas? Instead of trashing the old one, put it to good use at worldcomputerexchnage.org
4. Do something good for your body and for others. Volunteer at achillestrackclub.org, where you can participate in biweekly runs with disabled athletes.
5. Help a kid hit the books. Visit learningleaders.org to become a tutor for a New York City public school student.
6. Let your furry friend get in on the giving, too. Visit tdi-dog.org, where you can train your pet to be a therapy dog.

— Jennifer Tis



OPEN HEARTS: (Far left), Citymeals on Wheels volunteer Andrew Borrok serves Joyce Scanlon, while (above) the "Winter Wishes" program brings a smile and (left) some meals are packed.