

CHARITY WORKS FOR ME

BY RICHARD NORDSTROM

Throughout my life, I have tried to give back to help those less fortunate. My parents taught me this by example. Every holiday season included singing carols at the local nursing home to those who were shut-in. While at first I grumbled at being dragged into this "chore," I came to realize how good I felt seeing these old folks smile and sing along. Giving is good for you, it makes you feel happy, and it's contagious.

LIFE-CHANGING NONPROFITS FOR WOMEN AND YOUNG ADULTS

I have had the wonderful opportunity to be actively involved with two incredibly important and ambitious charitable nonprofits in both fundraising development and visibility activities. Several years ago, I wanted to expand my NPO (Nonprofit Organization) involvement beyond healthcare. I met President and Founder of GFI Karen Tramontano through a mutual friend. Though small, GFI was unusually powerful in elevating working women. Since I had seen firsthand through my business travels to South and Central America, Africa and Asia that women were by far the most visible working poor, driving economic growth among this population was very exciting to me. I met the leadership and several students at JAG soon after GFI. When I heard their stories, I was emotionally moved by the incredible obstacles these students overcame to graduate from high school.

The Global Fairness Initiative <http://www.globalfairness.org/> (GFI) promotes a more equitable, sustainable approach to economic development for the world's working poor. The founders include C.E.O. Karen Tramontano, and former President Bill Clinton, who remain involved. At GFI we believe women represent the greatest potential for putting an end to the cycle of poverty that undermines development around the globe. By advancing fair wages, equal access to markets, and balanced public policy, GFI works to generate opportunity and end the cycle of poverty.

I am particularly moved by how women around the globe face poverty-related challenges unique to their gender due to lack of access to land rights, multiple responsibilities within and outside home, as well as limited access to formal education and technical training. Although women are the backbone of the rural economy worldwide, handling the vast majority of agricultural production, they rarely receive fair and equitable compensation for their labor.

GFI is innovative in its approach to freeing women from the shackles of poverty and unfair trade practices. The results are multi-stakeholder engagements that economically empower poor women producers and create permanent and effective local market structures. This allows marginalized women to respond to market fluctuations, mitigate risk, and improve their livelihood. Truly transformative work!

The Annual Fairness Award Ceremony is November 24 at the Howard Theater in Washington, D.C. By honoring exceptional leaders whose work and life open opportunity and access for the working poor throughout the world, GFI looks to inspire a new generation of leaders who dedicate themselves to economic justice, fairness, and equality. <http://www.globalfairness.org/get-involved/fairness-award>.

Jobs for America's Graduates <http://jag.org/> (JAG) is a state-based national organization dedicated to preventing dropouts among young people who are most at-risk. Here I serve on the national board. In more than three decades of operation, JAG has delivered consistent, compelling results – helping over one million young people stay in school through graduation, pursue post-secondary education, and secure quality entry-level jobs leading to career advancement opportunities.

Through school visits, I have seen the life-changing effects of JAG Specialists who tirelessly provide proven programs and services for middle school, high school, and out-of-school youth to stay in school through graduation

from high school. It is tremendously gratifying to see so many of these young men and women pursue a collegiate education and/or enter and advance in their chosen career field. The cost to all of us is significant when we let our children fail in school. JAG is making a big difference.

The JAG National Leadership Awards event takes place in Washington D.C. on November 20th. By far the most inspirational event I attend, the stories shared by current and former JAG students express the deep need we have in the U.S.A. to continue participating in the effort to help young adults rise above their environment.



SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association) member raking salt in India.



Attendees at the 2013 JAG National Meeting in Washington, D.C.

At times I am tempted to cut back on my charitable involvement. Can I rationalize that I've done a lot already and it's time for someone else to step up? I could. But then I realize I would be giving up much more than I am giving, and my life is much richer for serving.

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