



SEEING IS BELIEVING

SITE SENDS YOU PICTURES OF YOUR AID

Remember when you got your first bike? Remember the pride you felt when you looked back and realized that your dad wasn't holding on to the seat anymore, that you were riding it on your own? Remember the feeling of exhilaration as you raced down the neighborhood hills? Your new bike gave you the independence to travel to the store or the park without having to get a ride from your parents.

Imagine what a milestone in your life a new bicycle would be if you grew up impoverished in sub-Saharan Africa. People living in poverty there routinely walk hours a day for food, water or health care. A bike dramatically cuts the time they spend taking care of the necessities of survival. The time saved can be used getting an education that may eventually lift them out of poverty.

At SeeYourImpact.org, you can buy a \$30 bike for a needy family, and dramatically improve their lives. Other, inexpensive, life-changing options are available on the website as well. At prices ranging from \$10 to \$600, you can provide assistance in the form of everything from water filters and mosquito nets, to vitamins or a year of school tuition.

See for yourself

There are lots of websites out there that offer similar opportunities to help those living in poverty. What makes SeeYourImpact unique is that you actually get to see your

impact. The site promises that within about two weeks of your donation you will receive an e-mail report detailing the impact it had. The report will include photos of the people you helped accepting and using your gift. It will also give specifics of their situation and how your gift helped to improve their lives.

SeeYourImpact works with partner charities around the world to facilitate the delivery of gifts. For instance, an existing charity that provides wheelchairs already has operations set up in rural India. It already has an inventory of wheelchairs to distribute to needy recipients. When a person in need is identified, and a gift is given to sponsor a wheelchair, it can be delivered quickly. The gift can then be used to replenish the inventory. This is how they are able to get a report on the actual recipient to the donor in the span of two weeks.

Every last penny

Another thing that makes this organization unique is that 100 percent of your donation goes to the gift you select. None of it is used for administrative or other costs. The agency is able to do this because some donors choose to give donations specifically for operational expenses. The site claims that these donations are enough to cover their costs, so any other donations can be used exclusively for gifts to the needy.

The organization is the brainchild of two former Microsoft executives, Scott Oki and Digvijay Chauhan. Having made their fortunes in the digital revolution, they are now using the technology they helped develop to help the less fortunate

around the world. Their mission with this site is "to transform giving into a joyful and fulfilling experience" by letting donors actually see the results of their generosity.

Simple and effective

The strategy of SeeYourImpact is to deliver practical solutions to people in need so they can focus their efforts on improving their lives. The design of the website follows this same philosophy. Simple, functional navigation, clean bright graphics and photos are used to quickly introduce and explain the site's goals.

Three big tabs at the top of the home page take you to the main sections of the site. The first one explains how the charity works, the second one is a catalog of gifts you can choose from, and the third one features real stories and photos of people who have been helped.

The color scheme and typography, as well as the pictures of smiling recipients, all combine to create a visually inviting website. The navigation functions well, and the content is organized and clearly labeled. The browsing experience is pleasant and inspiring. Rather than seeing images of fly-covered, starving children, we see smiling people working to overcome their circumstances.

This seems to be a more effective strategy. Instead of just giving people a handout, the charity aims to give them a hand up. People can't control the circumstances of their birth, but given a chance, most people will work hard for a better life.

KEVIN O'NEILL is a graphic artist for The Times-Tribune. Contact him at koneill@timesshamrock.com with links to your favorite websites.



KEVIN O'NEILL

InSites