

Have a heart

Internet can help you find and evaluate charities

The season of giving is upon us. Exchanging gifts with loved ones during the holidays is a fulfilling tradition. It strengthens the bonds between us by letting people know we care about them.

Giving doesn't have to be limited to those close to you, however. Thousands of charities give you a chance to help strangers in need. The people you help could be in your community, in another state or anywhere in the world.

Choosing a charity and figuring out how you can help can seem daunting, though. Fortunately, the internet has made researching charities much



KEVIN O'NEILL
InSites

easier. And most charities have websites that make donating money or time easy as well.

CharityNavigator.org is a well-known website that evaluates charities for financial management and transparency of operations. The

site rated the following groups as the top two large, global charities when it comes to putting your donation to good use.

DirectRelief.org

Direct Relief operates in all 50 states and 70 countries around the world. A wealthy Estonian immigrant in California started it in response to the suffering World War II caused.

The organization works to help those affected by poverty and emergencies, such as natural disasters and wars. Its specialty is supporting medical care

and providing medicine to afflicted areas. While it provides help around the world, a majority of its relief operations are in the United States.

The group's website, while not visually dynamic, is functional and full of information about the organization and its work. A comprehensive Participate section details how you can help.

MAP.org

MAP International has a similar mission to Direct Relief. It specializes in supporting health care and providing medicine to areas in need because of poverty, natural disasters or conflict.

The Christian charity began in Chicago in 1954 when the well-connected Dr. Raymond Knighton was approached by a pharmaceutical company that wanted to donate surplus medicine. His efforts to distribute the drugs resulted in the birth of the Medical Assistance Programs, or MAP. It now operates in more than 100 countries.

MAP's site is visually engaging. A slider on the homepage with large images of adorable, impoverished children tugs at your heartstrings. The Ways To Give section provides all of the information you'll need to donate.

Times are tough, and not everyone can afford to give to charity. However bad many of us think we have it, though, there's a good chance there are many people much worse off. So give what you can.

KEVIN O'NEILL is a staff artist for The Times-Tribune. Share your favorite websites and apps with him at koneill@timeshamrock.com.