



Actress Jessica Biel with President Bill Clinton at his '07 Clinton Global Initiative.

ELEEN LEVY

Net-working for good causes

FOR ANY NONPROFIT organization, fund-raising is a challenge. A new Web site is trying to change that.

Make the Difference Network (www.mtdn.com) was founded by actress Jessica Biel and her father, Costco member Jon Biel, after a profound experience with a young man afflicted with muscular dystrophy. "Jesse developed a relationship with the family," recalls Jon Biel. A year and a half later, the young man passed away, but it left Jessica wanting to do something to help others.

The two Biels formed a partnership with Costco member Kent McBride. The three created Make the Difference Network to help link nonprofits with individuals and businesses looking to help. According to Jon Biel, "There are two things a donor wants. They want to know where the money is going, and they want to see the results of their giving."

The site features fully vetted nonprofits and enables visitors to donate or sponsor an organization and see the progress it is making. All donations go directly to the nonprofit.

Make the Difference Network was introduced by the Biel family at former President Bill Clinton's 2007 Clinton Global Initiative.—*Steve Fisher*

A race against time

MOST PARENTS WITH a newborn can feel overwhelmed. Parents of a premature child, whose preemie status can lead to a host of physical problems, can be devastated.

All this makes the achievements of Nicole Schmidt and Erik Skulte, whose son, Alex, was born at just 26 weeks, particularly amazing.

Schmidt and Skulte, Costco members in Milford, Connecticut, have not only devoted themselves to helping Alex, now just over a year old, as he struggles with disabilities from two severe brain hemorrhages, seizures and meningitis, but have created a foundation to help other parents of preemies.

"When we got over the shock," says Schmidt, "we thought, 'Everything happens for a reason. Let's turn this into something positive.'"

The Baby Alex Foundation (www.babyalexfoundation.com) is

a charitable organization dedicated to funding pediatric brain-injury research. "One in eight newborns is a preemie," says Schmidt. "But only a tiny percentage of NIH [National Institutes of Health] funding goes to premature babies."

And Alex? For a child doctors thought might not even be able to walk, Schmidt says, "He's walking with help, and his speech is right on schedule for his age."

—*T. Foster Jones*



Alex weighed less than two pounds at birth.

NICOLE SCHMIDT



Alex Kehm

DENNIS KEHM

GOING FOR A goal

LAST YEAR, when Alex Kehm, son of longtime Costco members Dennis and Bonnie Kehm, learned that the U.S. Soccer Foundation collects used soccer gear to donate to underprivileged children around the world, Kehm, who was 13 at the time, says "I knew it would be a great idea to recycle my items instead of throwing them away."

When he called the Passback program, Alex found there wasn't a chapter in the St. Louis area. So he established one, Fenton Passback (<http://fentonpassback.com>). Alex's original goal was to collect 30 pieces of equipment. To date Fenton Passback has collected more than 1,650 pieces of soccer gear. For his efforts, Alex has received the President of the United States Volunteer Service Award and several other accolades. "Through Fenton Passback, I learned that anything is possible," Alex says. "I learned to reach beyond myself to the lives of those in need, bringing hope, friendship and opportunity."—*Will Fifield*

Cookies made with love

IN 2004 THINGS looked grim for the Stachler family. Dad Ken and daughter Susan underwent back-to-back chemo for non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and Hodgkin's disease, respectively.

Mother Laura was distraught until she learned that ginger helps cancer patients fight nausea. Having grown up in the restaurant industry, baking was something she knew and could do for her loved ones.

Enter Susansnaps (www.susansnaps.com), a gourmet cookie company co-owned by Laura and Susan, and named after Laura's sister Susan Carver Smith, who succumbed to Hodgkin's at age 28.

"What was once just a small idea has now turned into a thriving company, and it started with some flour, sugar, eggs, and spices from the Perimeter [Georgia] Costco," says Susan, who handles marketing and packaging and, like her dad, is doing OK.

The Atlanta-based company produces up to 10,000 of the chewy/crunchy cookies a day. A portion of sales goes to the nonprofit Susan Carver Foundation, which Laura established to support cancer research and cancer patients. "I've always wanted to give back, but never did I think I would be raising money for a cause I benefit from," says Susan.—*Shana McNally*



SUSAN STACHLER



What goes around...

TRENT ALBERT

ONE MAN'S TRASH is another man's treasure. Few know that better than the volunteers of Duneland Resale. Since 2001 the nonprofit in Chesterton, Indiana, has been selling used clothing, books, household items and even 15,000 donated golf balls to raise money for the community and other worthy causes.

Run with the help of 95 volunteers, Duneland Resale (www.dunelandresale.com) operates out of four locations and has raised more than \$700,000 that it has donated on community, national and international levels.

Duneland Resale has helped numerous groups and organizations, such as local food pantries, a women's shelter, and lupus and Alzheimer's foundations, along with the victims of the 2004 Thailand tsunami and Hurricane Katrina.

"If there is a need, we do our best to help," says Kim Goldak, a Costco member and Duneland Resale volunteer and board member. "If a person or a family has problems paying their bills, Duneland Resale is called upon to help. We also provide flu shots to our community. We are more or less an outreach organization funded by our resale shop.

"It's not a handout; it's a hand up."—*Stephanie E. Ponder*

Kim Goldak (right front) and her treasured Duneland volunteers.

Teaching the fishermen

WHEN FACED WITH the career question of whether they wanted to feed fish to people or teach people how to catch them, Costco members Kathleen Brennan and her husband, Jerry Cianciolo, chose the latter.

In 1986, the two Costco members left their jobs working for nonprofit organizations and launched *Contributions*. It's a quarterly magazine for nonprofit organizations that today goes out to 50,000 subscribers across the country. That led to publishing how-to books for staff and board members of nonprofits on all topics, from marketing to mobilizing volunteers.

Their business, Emerson & Church Publishers (www.emersonandchurch.com), in Medfield, Massachusetts, has published 23 books. The most popular is *Fund Raising Realities Every Board Member Must Face*, by David Lansdowne, which has sold 100,000 copies.

"I really feel we've made a difference because, instead of working for just one cause, I feel like we've had an impact on thousands of causes and hundreds of thousands of volunteers," Brennan says. "That's what motivates us to keep going."—*Tim Talevich*

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

IF YOU HAVE a note, photo or story to share (it should be about Costco or Costco members in some way), you can send it to "The Member Connection," *The Costco Connection*, P.O.

Box 34088, Seattle, WA 98124-1088, or e-mail to connection@costco.com with "The Member Connection" in the subject line. Submissions cannot be acknowledged or returned.