

newsworthy trends

Finding Inexpensive Ways To Give Back

(NAPSA)—As the economy slows, Americans' generosity has reached record heights.

Charitable giving in the U.S. exceeded \$306 billion last year, topping the \$300 billion mark for the first time in history, according to Giving USA Foundation. But people aren't just donating money to help others, they're donating their time and talents as well. Here are a few inexpensive ways you might make a difference in your community:

1. Invite a friend or neighbor to attend a school board meeting.

2. Organize a book drive.

3. Help a child open a bank savings account.

4. Tutor at an adult literacy program.

5. Contact a local health clinic and offer to distribute flyers.

6. You might also help others through your work. For instance, Bank of America associates recently volunteered at sites to help hardworking individuals claim the earned income tax credit on their returns. The bank also expanded its work with the United Way Financial Stability Partnership, increasing funding to \$2 million.

IBM donated consulting assistance valued at \$660,000 to help United Way develop a road map for a unified national 2-1-1 system, as well as a Disaster Evacuation Registration Service. 2-1-1 connects callers with important community services and volunteer opportunities.

In addition, through their company's Neighbor to Neighbor program, UPS employees organize



There are a number of affordable, creative ways to help communities.

food drives, work in soup kitchens and mentor troubled youth. They also help improve impoverished communities across the U.S. and around the world and volunteer on nonprofit boards.

You might help the community by shopping at certain stores, too. JCPenney holds a "Day of Giving Back," when customers can purchase a coupon for 20 percent off merchandise and proceeds are donated to after-school programs.

Additionally, Kellogg's Special K recently hosted a Celebrity Jeans Auction that raised thousands for United Way and informed women about the Special K Challenge to drop a jean size in two weeks.

You might even make a difference by watching TV. NBC created an online campaign encouraging fans of its show "The Office" to make a difference in their communities. Also, "Today" show anchor Ann Curry bungee jumped after viewers donated \$10,000 to United Way and other causes.

For more ideas on how to give, advocate and volunteer, visit www.liveunited.org.