GIVE A LITTLE CHARITY

By Brian Pickett and Phillip Buff

We hear it every day, **"How Can We Help?"** Many of us want to find ways to make the world a better place. But what does it really take to make that happen? What steps are there in the process of taking up the task of providing the needed materials and donatable goods to allow a charitable organization to keep running? What happens when problems arise, conflicts of interest or time commitments, or other situations that might sabotage your efforts to make such an impact in your community or the world at large. Here are a few questions you can answer for yourself that will help get the ball rolling, and determine what type of help you might be best able to give.

1. What, when you look out at the world we currently live in, do you feel you **most need to set right?** Or, what do you feel is important to put your time and energies towards trying to help make better? Give some thought to why such things are important, and be sure to be honest with how important this really is to you. Finding a charity isn't the hard part, finding one you're passionate about genuinely making a difference for is. A good, very comprehensive list to help choose a charity is at the following website: http://www.charity-charities.org/charities/index.html

2. Skills – Is there anything that you can offer to a group that needs assistance? Of course, there are myriad ways to help others. **Try to think outside the box!** If you are great with numbers, maybe donating a couple of hours a week or month to a local branch of your Volunteers of America's accounting department might be an option you can consider and speak with them about. Or perhaps you love to bake or do crochetting as a hobby, many schools and churches gain extra funds for their extra curricular activities through sales of such goods. And military folks who are overseas love to receive home-made scarves, hats and socks for those colder climates! Again, the key is to think about what you can do – and more importantly **like** to do – that can benefit others in a way that allows you to feel like you're doing something good without making it feel like a chore.

3. Logistics – Do you have constraints on your time, already? Are there financial issues to consider? Are you physically unable to do certain things do to mobility, dexterity or allergy-related issues? Is there a problem with transportation to a given charitable establishment, or being able to haul goods collected to the organization's nearest branch? These are all things that must be considered, when choosing a charity to work with and ask them questions about, when beginning your endeavors to help out. But just becaue the choice of charitable organization won't work out for you due to one (or more) of these complications doesn't mean you should give up. Keep at it! Look for other organizations where these challenges won't be a problem; remember that they are just that, challenges, not baracades from helping out at all. If all else fails, perhaps forming a new charitable organization might be an option. Remember, **there are always possibilities** when you look for them.

4. Contact information – Many organizations want to have a way to get ahold of you when they have a need for your particular skills and abilities. Do you work in a place that won't allow you to receive phone calls while on shift? Are you unavailable every Wednesday due to an appointment with your Chiropractor or Physical Therapist? Have you had problems with too much e-mail circulating in your personal (or work) inbox? Perhaps having a free e-mail account set up to work with the charity you contact might be in order, or offering a website link showing hours/days you are available to help out, along with your (and your fellow crew members wanting to volunteer) skill set and range of capabilities and logistic information is in order. Again, **think outside the box!** Be creative, have fun, and this will allow you to find ways that not only gets your group the notice you want from these organizations, but be remembered, too.