

# The Path Forward

## For New & Growing Non-Profit Organizations



May 2008

### Gifts In Kind International

Nonprofit organizations can save a lot of money by registering with Gifts In Kind International at [www.giftsinkind.org](http://www.giftsinkind.org). This organization receives donations of new products including office supplies, equipment, educational supplies, construction supplies, computers, software and appliances. Then it contributes these items to registered nonprofits who request them for a small fee and the cost of shipping. It's a good idea to register your organization so that you can receive the weekly updates of new product donations which are available.

### Matching Gifts

Where do your donors work? It is quite possible that their companies participate in a matching gift program. If so, you may be eligible to receive matching donations from the company just by completing the necessary forms. Here's how to get started. First, ask your donors to tell you the names of their company. Then, discover if the company has a matching gift program. You can contact the company by telephone, search the corporate website, or go to [www.hepdevelopment.com/gift.cfm](http://www.hepdevelopment.com/gift.cfm). This is where you can purchase a PDF download of *The HEP 2008 Match Register* for \$125. If your organization is a faith based one, know that some companies exclude these from their programs. Others, however, share the faith based priorities and will extend their matched giving to you. You have to ask each company about its giving priorities.

### State Tax Credits

Most states have some means to fund nonprofit organizations. In Missouri this is done by tax credits. Nonprofit organizations which serve Missouri communities and Missouri youth in particular can apply. The tax credits are distributed on a first come first serve basis to eligible nonprofit organizations including faith based ones. Then, in exchange for donations of products, service, or cash, the nonprofit organization awards tax credits to off-set up to the total state tax liability equal to 50% of the value of the actual gift. The applications are found at the Missouri Department of Economic Development website. They are lengthy and somewhat complicated but for up to \$500,000 in actual goods and services, would you expect something simple? I can help. If you are not in Missouri, check your state's programs for something comparable.

### A Philanthropic Parable—The Poor Widow's Tale

By Lesley Barker

You may have heard the tale of a certain poor widow whose cupboards were bare. She lived once upon a time and long long ago. Unless she could find someone to give her a grant her late husband's creditors, who were threatening to enslave her two young sons, would make good on their threat. Time was running out. The poor widow had just about given up hope.

One day a rich and famous man and his servant came walking through the village where the poor widow lived and she heard about it. She was like many nonprofit organizations who lack the funds they need to change the future for its clients and so she became tremendously excited at the prospect of a grant from the rich and famous man. Did I mention that this poor widow's late husband had been a classmate of the rich and famous man when they both had been in their early twenties?

Pushing her two young sons ahead of her, the poor widow ran to the side of the road at a spot where the rich and famous man and his servant would be sure to pass. Of course the poor widow was not alone in her hope that the rich and famous man would provide some funding. The road was lined with the village beggars, the blind, deaf, and lame. All of them noticed the rich and famous man's approach. All of them extended their open hands, "Alms, Alms for the poor! Give us a grant. We have a great need. Help us. It's obvious that we really need help. It's also obvious that you have the funds to solve our very serious problem."

The poor widow did not allow her two young sons to join the crowd neither to extend their hands nor shout a demand. The three just stood there, waiting, because the poor widow knew that her late husband's friend would remember him and treat her with favor. Indeed, when the rich and famous man's servant passed by the poor widow ahead of the rich and famous man, she asked for him to tell his master that she would like to ask him for advice.

It worked. Whereas the rich and famous man didn't even seem to notice the crowd of beggars, the blind, deaf and lame, at the nod of his servant, he turned off the road and greeted his old friend's widow and her two young sons. You can imagine that she told him her desperate plight expecting him to reach into his money pouch for some gold coins to place in her hands to satisfy the creditors and save her two young sons from becoming enslaved. But no, that is not what the rich and famous man did. He asked, "What do you have in your house?"

Surprised, the poor widow thought about what her answer should be. "I have only one small clay jar with just a small amount of oil in my house," she answered the rich and famous man, wondering what he would say or do next.

"Go, ask all your neighbors to give you as many empty jars as they have. Then take your two boys inside your house. Shut the door and fill the empty jars with your oil. Then sell the oil back to the neighbors. Use the funds to pay off the creditors and then you can live off of the rest."

It happened even as the rich and famous man predicted for he was a prophet indeed and his grant transformed the poor widow's entire situation. Imagine what would have happened if the widow had not taken the time to consider what she had to start with in answer to the rich and famous man's question.

This story includes all of the pieces that make up a map to your next grant - a clearly described immediate situation or need; a funder; a strategic and relational approach to the funder; a clearly stated request; and a willingness to engage with the funder's specific directions. The outcome is a transformational solution to a very serious problem that more than meets the immediate need and leaves room for on-going success in the future.

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