

WISHES CAN COME TRUE WITH HELP OF READERS



Inside The Times

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An outboard boat motor, baby wipes, gravel, 28-gallon Rubbermaid tubs with lids, pet food and documents about UFOs — they're all on somebody's wish list.

Who could wish for these things and much more? Hundreds of nonprofit organizations committed to improving

people's lives and solving all sorts of social problems in our community.

Who fulfills those wishes? You and thousands of other readers of The Seattle Times.

Every holiday season for seven years now, The Times has organized what we call the Nonprofit Wish List, and its name sums up its purpose.

"Each year, we put out the call to nonprofits in our core readership area and ask them what they need to do their good works," says Bill Ristow, Times features editor. "Not donations or volunteers — you know nearly all of them need those. The Wish List lets nonprofits ask our readers for things they need to accomplish their mission."

Don't confuse this with The Seattle Times Fund For The Needy, a program sponsored by The Seattle Times Co. that entered its 26th year this season. The fund gives generous readers the opportunity to make financial contributions that support the work of 12 selected organizations whose good efforts are featured in a series of stories from November through January.

The Wish List is different, not just because it focuses on things rather than money but because it's open to any registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit in our area (King, Snohomish and Pierce counties and Bainbridge Island).

"Each year we've done the Wish List, it has grown larger, and this year's edition hosts a stunning total of more than 500 nonprofit agencies," Ristow says.

You'll find their Wish Lists, conveniently organized by the type of services the agencies offer, on our Web site at www.seattletimes.com/wishlist.

"In past years, we've always published the lists in the newspaper as well as online," Ristow says. "It was the success of the feature that forced us to change course this year and to publish it only on seattletimes.com. Last year the list had grown so large that it filled seven full pages of the newspaper. This year, with roughly 20 percent more agencies, it would have been even larger."

The Web listings make it easy to find a place where you can help. They also allow you to click directly to an agency's Web site, if it has one, in case you want to know more about it.

"Simply browsing through the categories gives an inspiring picture of agencies doing important work," Ristow says. "Their wishes can be small or large, but they're all real."

Here are examples that Ristow culled from the Wish List:

- **Cocoon House** helps homeless kids in Snohomish County. Its list includes things like gift certificates for haircuts, new twin bedding and alarm clocks.

- **The Des Moines Area Food Bank** would love some frozen turkeys to give local residents a holiday treat. And like many agencies, it would sure like some items to make its own office more efficient: a good sturdy hand truck, a new computer.

- A number of agencies show the impact of immigration on our region and, paralleling that, our interest in issues around the globe. **Somali Community Services**, which helps East African refugees, needs school supplies: textbooks, calculators, markers, paper ... and, of course, Somali-English dictionaries.

- **The Gambia Health Education Liaison Project**, meanwhile, provides educational and medical supplies directly to West African villages. It needs English dictionaries and nursery-school and children's picture books, among other things.

- People's needs go beyond food and shelter, and the **Bellevue Youth Symphony Orchestra**, which provides a full-orchestra experience for Eastside youth,

would love to receive a variety of instruments for members who can't afford them. (And if you happen to have an Eastside performance hall in your backyard, the orchestra could use that, too!)

- **Pets** play a huge role in our lives, and more than two dozen of the nonprofits do something involving animals. **The Animal Safe Haven Association**, which specializes in care and adoption services for cats, hopes to receive anything from cat beds to electric heating pads to kitty food.

"Maybe you get the picture: Whatever cause is closest to your heart or life, there's a good chance you'll find it in this year's Wish List," Ristow says. "And you'll make a big difference — both to the hard-working agency staffs and to all the people they serve."

So, visit seattletimes.com/wishlist and make someone's wish come true.

Inside the Times appears in the Sunday Seattle Times. If you have a comment on news coverage, write to Michael R. Fancher, P.O. Box 70, Seattle, WA 98111, call 206-464-3310 or send e-mail to mfancher@seattletimes.com. More columns at www.seattletimes.com/columnists

> **The Wish List: You can find a nonprofit's wish that YOU can fulfill at this site: seattletimes.com/wishlist**