

Bren Simon: Is There a Difference Between Charity and Philanthropy?

The following is adapted from a previous posting from Bren Simon regarding thinking and acting philanthropically. Visit brensimon.com for more information.

WASHINGTON, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, UNITED STATES, October 8, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- When talking about making a donation, either of time, money or items (like clothing or food,) we often use the words [charity](#) and [philanthropy](#) interchangeably. We may say “Susan performed such an act of charity when she gave 10 winter coats to her local shelter” or one may describe a friend as having a “philanthropic nature”. While both words so refer to the act of giving, there are some important distinctions to be made between the two.



Charity has been described as something we, as Americans, experience regularly in our culture. Early on in elementary school, we are taught to be generous and to share. In religious and moral settings we are taught to think of our neighbor in their times of need. From change jars at registers with causes written on the front to food drives during the holiday season, we are called to be charitable to our neighbor down the street, to even our global neighbors, on a regular basis.

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Think philanthropically and watch your community – and your world – begin to change”

Bren Simon

By that definition, acts of charity all sound great – what

could philanthropy possibly have on charity?

Steve Gunderson, former President and CEO of the Council on Foundations described the nuanced difference between charity and philanthropy as this:

“Charity tends to be a short-term, emotional, and immediate response, focused primarily on rescue and belief, whereas philanthropy is much more long term, more strategic, focused on rebuilding. One of my colleagues says there is charity, which is good, and then there is problem-solving charity, which is called philanthropy, and I think that’s the distinction I have tried to

make.”

Philanthropy, then, is the preferred method because it not only seeks to help, but intentionally searches for the root of the problem and looks for solutions. It is great to offer food, shelter, and clothing to someone without a home. But how much better would it be to provide solutions to the problems such as hosting a job fair or funding an abuse clinic. Don't get me wrong: charity, meeting the immediate human needs of your fellow human, is good and necessary in our world today. However, it's important to keep in mind the words of someone best known for philanthropic actions, John Rockefeller:

“The best philanthropy is constantly in search of the finalities – a search for a cause, an attempt to cure evils at their source.”

So, as you go through your week, add the dollar to the disaster relief jar. Volunteer at your local food bank. Offer to take your elderly neighbor to the store. But allow your mind to start thinking in terms of the big picture – begin to think philanthropically and watch your community – and your world – begin to change.

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