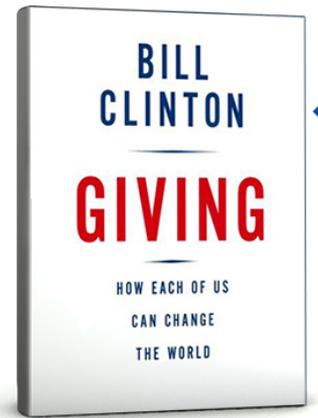




STORIES OF GIVING

Cancer Survivor Takes Action

By Janet R Halbert | gift type: Skills, Things, Time



After a year of cancer treatments, I founded Hurdle Jumpers, a non-profit charity, to offer an empathic, practical and empowering response to an unmet need I discovered and experienced as a cancer patient.

I thought it would be wonderful for patients to receive a kit, from their doctor or nurse, which could assist them on their journey to wellness, but designed from a *patient's* perspective, to help reduce anxiety and stress, while arming them with tips, advice and helpful products. So after my own treatment ended, Hurdle Jumpers was born.

Now, Hurdle Jumpers provides free comfort kits for cancer patients, containing a variety of donated sample products from 15 nationally recognized pharmaceutical and consumer health companies, along with a humor book, my personal collection of survival tips, educational materials, a relaxation CD and other practical items I found to be useful in managing the side effects of cancer treatment. By drawing on my business problem solving skills to build Hurdle Jumpers, I've ensured the kits are free of charge to any cancer patient or caregiver. I've also engaged the volunteer services of prominent medical experts and community activists, corporate product donors, in-kind professional services, free warehouse space, and a large pool of volunteers for assembly and shipping. We introduced the kits in 2006 to health care professionals and patients on a limited basis. The response was powerful, with requests currently over 700 per month, distributed directly to patients through oncology practices.

If someone asked me why give, I would let them know three things: First, I would recommend that they choose something about which they are passionate, where they can use their skills and knowledge base to help others. I would also recommend that they find ways to create community in their volunteer efforts, perhaps by engaging their friends or finding others to work with who share their interest and devotion. And I would tell other volunteers not to be afraid to start something new. If you see an unmet need, be creative and try to find a way to fill it. It was fun to access my creativity: from developing packaging to documenting the tips and advice which are often shared among cancer patients, friends and medical professionals.

I come from a family tradition of community involvement and service, so giving is a concept that I understand quite well. Through my involvement with Hurdle Jumpers, I also came to know the benefits of giving in terms of my own recovery from the physical and emotional trauma I experienced during treatment. And by sharing my experiences I hope the insight I gained is useful and comforting to others. I feel like I'm helping each person who receives one of our kits.

I took the lemons of a cancer diagnosis and made lemon meringue pie. And I know Hurdle Jumpers is the most important volunteer project I've ever undertaken. I'm reminded daily there's a lot of happiness in giving.

To learn more about Hurdle Jumpers and how you might participate, log onto www.hurdlejumpers.org

