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Being asked and asking for money at Christmas

Mary Ann McGivern | Dec. 18, 2013 NCR Today

I'm deleting requests for money from groups I value -- Amnesty International, Coalition for the Environment, Nonviolent Peaceforce, I could go on. You could go on. We can't give to everything. Most people give to about five groups. That's me.

At the same time I'm deleting asks, I'm sending one of my own. It's a funding letter to family and friends for a group I'm on the board of, a group to cut military spending. We went to a politician's office last week, six of us -- three in their 20s and the other three of us in our 50s and 70s. Together, we made a series of passionate statements for peace and against spending money for arms. Passion is why I work for this local group, so I asked my friends to give, too.

'Tis the season for asking. Something like 40 percent of contributions are made in December and 10 percent are made the last three days of December. So we all have to forgive the unrelenting nature of the seasonal ask and cooperate with it as best we can.

Besides, all these asks are recounting wonderful accomplishments. Meals served, surgeries performed, trees planted, newspapers published. Nonprofits do a lot of work. My small organization established a youth initiative five years ago when we suddenly grasped the long-term implications of all our graying heads. Our current steady stream of interns, our sponsoring of a college organizing committee, and our newish board members in their 30s are accomplishments to celebrate.

This week, the local news reported that the Salvation Army kettle collections in St. Louis are significantly down. That's a worry for us all -- not just a sign that giving might be down all over, but for the people in need of the Salvation Army's services. The weather's been bad and shopping profits are a little lower, so I guess we are pulling inside ourselves with the cold and being less generous. We won't know if this is a brief glitch in giving patterns until early January. All we can do, all of us, is ask and give.

We can't give to everything, but it is the season to give to the groups we rely on to work on our behalf. As one friend says, "Give until you feel it -- and it feels good."

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