

The Volunteer And Charitable Spirit Of North America

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The United States is the most charitable country in the world. Americans give to charity more than twice as much as the next most charitable country. Charitable giving in the USA exceeds \$300 Billion per year. Charitable giving accounts for 1.7% of U.S. Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia are in a virtual tie for second place, with a charitable giving rate of 0.7% of GDP. Many countries have much lower rates of charitable giving. For example, in France, the charitable giving rate is 0.1% of GDP.

In the USA, the predominant driving force for charitable giving is individuals, not corporations. The majority of low and middle income families give money to charity. And the magnitude of charitable giving, so far, has been almost recession-proof.

Charitable giving seems to be embedded in the culture of North America. The USA does not have the safety net and universal social services that dominate many other countries. And the history of the USA is that individuals help each other out in times of need, with little or no assistance from the government. The USA enjoys lower tax rates than most other countries. This results in more disposable income available for charitable giving. Furthermore, the U.S. tax code makes charitable gifts tax deductible, thus providing an additional incentive. And charitable giving means far more than the donation of funds. It encompasses donation of personal time and effort by “doing” activities related to the cause.

By far, religious organizations are the greatest beneficiary of charitable giving in the USA. They receive one-third of all gifts. Foundations, such as the North American Thrombosis Forum (NATF), receive 11% of donations. The foundations, in turn, redistribute the funds they receive and “give back” into the pool of charities.

At NATF, we have begun emphasizing the importance of charitable giving. Our kickoff fundraising event was a Friends of NATF Dinner held at Brigham and Women’s Hospital on July 14, 2009. We outlined our successes to date and planned future programming. We raised more than \$10,000. However, at this event, we also solicited and engaged new volunteers to work on a variety of assignments. These include authoring eThrombosis articles for our NATF website, helping with NATF fundraising efforts, and working on NATF advocacy, follow-on biologics, or public policy projects.

NATF will hold a special fundraising event, the NATF International Atherothrombosis and Pulmonary Embolism Dinner Conference, on Thursday evening, October 29, at the University Club in Boston. At this program, we hope to raise more than \$100,000.

In summary, NATF benefits from the charitable spirit and culture of giving in North America. Fortunately, the recession has barely dented charitable giving. Charity includes “doing” activities to support organizations as well as providing financial donations.