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Season's *Gilty* Pleasures:  
2015 Gift Guide

*The*  
**GIFT OF GIVING**

November 2015 • \$3.95



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# GIVE THE GIFT *-of-* GIVING

BY CHRIS GARNEY

Every winter as the holidays approach, something wondrous happens across the planet. Hearts and minds open, and acts of giving and kindness bubble forth in small ways and in big to make the world a better place. The holiday season has long been called the Season of Giving and for the innumerable charitable and philanthropic organizations across the Las Vegas Valley, this is the most important time of year.

In fact, according to Julie Murray, CEO and principal of the Moonridge Group, this is the time that accounts for a vast majority of the funding most charities receive in a year.

"There is just something about the season that puts people in a giving mood," she said.

To that end, below are profiles of a variety of charitable and philanthropic organizations doing amazing work in Las Vegas—and even across the world—that are depending on holiday donations. They run the gamut from large organizations that deal with hunger to smaller ones that help at-risk youth through work in the entertainment industry.

While there are hundreds of established charities in need of your money and time, these have been chosen to present a different view. From the large to the small, these great organizations and causes make a difference in the world every day, and you can help them to continue to effect these positive changes.



Three Square President & CEO Brian Burben



### THE MOONRIDGE GROUP

The Moonridge Group is not a charity, but rather an organization of passionate and knowledgeable people who work with corporations and private citizens to help maximize the impact of their charitable donations. Think of it as a financial planner for philanthropy.

Not only does the Moonridge Group help prospective philanthropists think of their giving as an investment, but it also helps to bring a financial discipline to the charitable organizations that receive their funding.

Murray even went so far as to suggest that if philanthropists begin to look at their giving as an investment, the rewards are greater and the monetary outlay will have a much more positive impact on their communities.

When asked how people could get the biggest bang for their buck with their charitable donations, she said that there is two ways. The first is to fully research organizations to find the ones that have the lowest overhead. A low overhead means a

greater percentage of every dollar goes to the cause. Secondly, she suggested finding a cause that you feel passionate about and donate to an organization working for that cause. A personal connection to a cause can make all the difference in the world, she said.

For more information about the Moonridge Group, please contact 702.570.7693 or email connect@moonridgegroup.com.

### CAMELOT AT OPPORTUNITY VILLAGE

Opportunity Village has long been called "Las Vegas' favorite charity" and for good reason. According to its website, "Opportunity Village is a not-for-profit charitable organization serving children and adults in the southern Nevada community with intellectual disabilities, to enhance their lives and the lives of the families who love them."

Its mission is to make people the best they can be through vocational training and community employment as well as arts and, perhaps most importantly, social recreation. Children and adults with intellectual disabilities often feel

alone, and Opportunity Village does great work bringing them together in a place where they can learn, make friends and be happy.

Each year, Opportunity Village dazzles Las Vegas citizens with its Magical Forest, a holiday tradition in Vegas akin to the lighting of the Christmas tree at Rockefeller Center. Thousands of visitors pass through the forest's lighted pathways and dazzling trees annually to raise money for the organization. And also, on Nov. 12, Opportunity Village hosts Camelot at the Magical Forest.

For more information about Camelot or the Magical Forest at Opportunity Village, contact Dawn Newburg at 702.880.4096 or email her at nubergd@opportunityvillage.org.

### ARTTEC

ARTTEC is an organization that pairs at-risk high school students with entertainment industry professionals "to educate, inspire and entertain, while providing art-related experiences for the community and industry-relevant career skills for students."

How many of you once dreamed of a career in film or television, but due to fear or ignorance never pursued that goal? ARTTEC is all about building connections in an industry notoriously difficult to break into without them.

Students are given the tools to develop skills and gain valuable experience. Mentors get to 'pay it forward' as they share their vast knowledge and experience with students in a meaningful and rewarding exchange. ARTTEC is in need of funding and volunteers to help this cause.

For more information, call 844-4ARTTEC or email Gary@arttecusa.com.

### THREE SQUARE

Three Square (as in three square meals a day) is an antihunger organization dedicated to feeding the estimated 305,000 Las Vegas Valley residents who do not get enough to eat. Conceived by Julie Murray of the Moonridge Group at her dining room table, Three Square has grown to be the model for food banks across the country.

Three Square re-invented the food bank concept by approaching previously untapped sources, such as grocery stores and hotel

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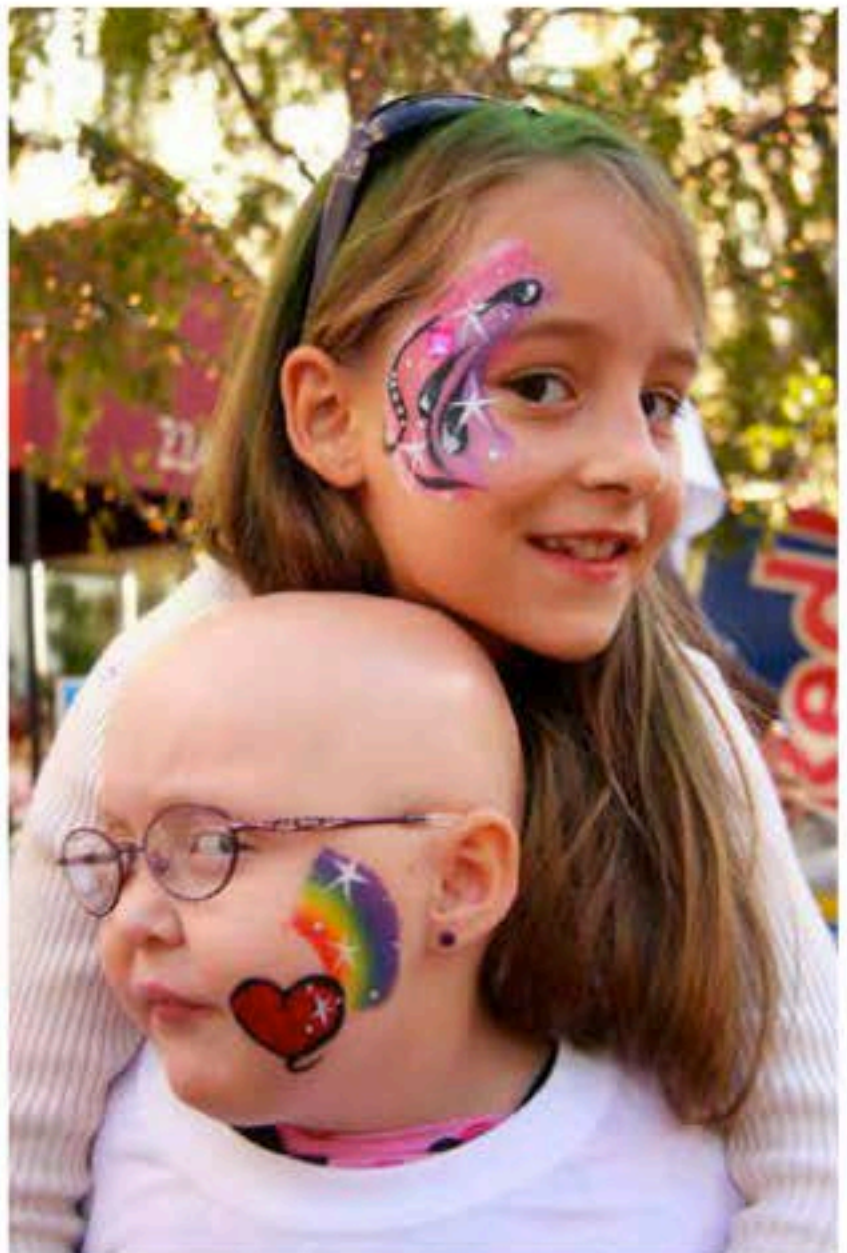
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Volunteers in kitchen. Photo courtesy of Three Square



Opportunity Village's Assembly Authority workers assembling coffee condiment packets for its contract with Caesars Entertainment.



NCCF's Danny Gans Memorial Champions Run for Life hosted by Danny Osmond. Photo courtesy of Nevada Childhood Cancer Foundation

chains. Food that previously would end up in landfills now lands on plates that feed thousands of people a day.

Three Square currently distributes millions of meals a year through hundreds of partner programs. It is in need of funding, donations and volunteers, and always welcomes new faces.

For more information, call 702.644.FOOD or go to [threesquare.org](http://threesquare.org).

### ANDRE AGASSI COLLEGE PREPARATORY ACADEMY

The mission of the Andre Agassi College Preparatory Academy is to "prepare students from underserved communities to excel and graduate from colleges and universities in order to succeed in a global society."

The academy is a kindergarten to 12th-grade tuition-free charter school that believes that every child has the chance to succeed if given the right tools to do so. By creating high standards to which both students and teachers are held accountable, Andre Agassi provides an environment that seeds and expects excellence in a world that often settles for mediocrity.

**Zoom in** tennis great Andre Agassi in 2001 with a personal donation of \$35 million, the academy has become an award-winning model charter school. In 2009, the school had a 100 percent graduation rate and an expected 100 percent college acceptance rate. The academy is always in need of funding.

For more information, call 702.948.6000.



Photo courtesy Grant a Gift Autism Foundation

### GRANT A GIFT AUTISM FOUNDATION

"Grant a Gift Autism Foundation is a non-profit organization helping children, youth and their families fight Autism by providing diagnostic and treatment funding, support services, vocational training, transition planning, and education."

One in 68 children is born with autism, a general term for a group of complex brain development disorders. Though each person is different, in general, autistic patients suffer from difficulties in social interaction, verbal and nonverbal communication, and repetitive behaviors

Often when a child is diagnosed with autism, a family's first reaction is fear and confusion. The Grant a Gift Autism Foundation's job is to help educate and aid those who suffer from autism as well as their families. There is no cure, but there is comfort.

The Grant a Gift Autism Foundation holds the Fashion for Autism, one of its biggest

fundraisers, on Nov. 5. This gala brings together autism community heroes with fashion luminaries for a night of food, celebration and fundraising.

For more information, call 702.564.2453 or visit [grantgiftfoundation.org](http://grantgiftfoundation.org).

### NEVADA CHILDHOOD CANCER FOUNDATION

Founded in 1993, the Nevada Childhood Cancer Foundation provides "social, emotional, educational, and psychological support services and programs to families of all children diagnosed with life-threatening or critical illnesses." The charity, which focuses its efforts in Southern Nevada, is sometimes the last hope a child has—all at no cost to their family.

But, as you might expect, the kind of care provided by the Nevada Childhood Cancer Foundation is not cheap, so its biggest need is monetary donations. To that end, it's hosting its 22nd annual Profiles of Courage Gala on Nov. 21-22 at the Bellagio. The

event, which provides the vast majority of the foundation's annual funding, includes a silent auction and a black tie-optional dinner.

For more information, call 702.735.8434 or check out the event flyer at [nvccf.org](http://nvccf.org).

The fundraising events and galas held by these organizations in November and December are responsible for raising the vast majority of funds for their yearly operational budgets. Without you, they cannot continue to do the amazing work they do each and every day.

During this Season of Giving, the best gift any of us can give is hope. The organizations above provide just that, and all of them are deserving of your support. Please take the time to research them further and pick one to help this holiday season.

After all, as Julie Murray said, "Just do one thing (to help) this holiday season, and you will discover just how much you get from giving." □

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