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GUEST OPINION RUTHELLEN S. RUBIN

'TIS THE SEASON TO BE CHARITABLE

Princeton area local nonprofit organizations prepare all year long for the chaotic month of December. The holiday season challenges the resources of our human service organizations as their staff work day and night to see to it that our neediest citizens have warm clothes, enough to eat and something special to give their children. Counseling centers are open around the clock through this tumultuous season to meet the unending demand for services. Our cultural institutions are in full swing and open their doors to many of our citizens who could not afford a ticket or entry fee on their own.

December is also the busiest fundraising month of the year as many groups make their Annual or Holiday Appeal to their loyal donors and neighbors. It is the one time when groups ask their supporters to donate to their cause in order to pay the salaries and sustain the infrastructure to keep these incredible institutions in our community. These are the dollars that especially help our local grassroots organizations build internal capacity and keep these critically important institutions organizationally healthy. And, this funding enables nonprofit organizations to continue to deliver their programs and services all year long.

So many of you responded generously a year ago after the tsunami, when you were called to action to help rebuild lives in South Asia. You dug deep into your pockets again this fall to support the massive effort to save and provide relief for the hundreds of thousands who lost their homes and livelihoods in the wake of Katrina and Rita. This year, many children in Mercer County became acquainted with philanthropy for the first time as they sent portions of their allowance or dollars raised in a bake sale, to help the victims of these catastrophic events. And, the Internet as a source of information and a vehicle for online giving has engaged Generation X in the spirit of giving -- big time.

So, fellow citizens, let's ride the wave and keep the momentum going. Fundraising is not a zero sum game. I believe that the more people give, the more people give. Whether you make your charitable donation because you want to give back or preserve a cherished belief, to alleviate a problem or to get tax deduction, know that a generous contribution to your favorite local charity will make a difference.

Unlike many of my colleagues who believe that the tragic global events of the past year will hurt their fundraising initiatives this December, I believe quite the opposite. I love that more people are giving and that those altruistic acts are increasingly front page news. Prove me right. Your support of the local organizations that are working so diligently to resolve our community's challenges will build a healthier world for *all* of our children.

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