

## Giving Pledge Signers Gave Big in 2013 but No Much for Today's Needs

By Helaina Hovitz

This holiday season, many people plan to give donations to their favorite charities: \$20, \$100, maybe even more — after all, the average level of giving in the U.S. is 2-3 percent of annual income. But some are giving away 50 to 90 percent of their entire income or net worth, with the help of an organization called Bolder Giving.

The idea behind Bolder: inspire people to build giving into their lives in a big way, and on a consistent basis. Many people need individual support and advice to figure out how to give in a meaningful way, so Bolder offers peer support and resources to help people get connected. The non-profit gathers the stories of incredibly generous givers and publicizes them through presentations, publications, partnerships with other organizations, and the web.

Their executive director, Jason Franklin, 32, lives in the West Village and teaches Philanthropy, Social Change and American Government at NYU's Wagner Graduate School of Public Service. After studying politics and nonprofit management in college, he continued to organize around issues of public education

and HIV/AIDS prevention, and went on to work for non-profits like the 21st Century School Fund and the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council.

Franklin, who always grabs his morning coffee at Jack's on West 10th Street, enjoys wandering amid Chelsea's many art galleries, and eating at Risoterria on Bleecker Street. "I often meet my students at Think Coffee on Mercer Street, but I love it best in the summer when there's fewer NYU students there and I can actually hear myself talk," he said.

His own personal journey of social justice started at age 14, when his Oregon high school found itself facing a 25 percent budget cut — along with all of the other public schools in the state. He was so outraged that he started a group called Oregon Students Supporting Education.

"I was convinced that if everyone heard about it, they would be just as angry as I was," he said. "In six months, 10,000 students across the state, along with teachers and parents, joined the movement, and the proposed public school budget cuts were nixed. I saw at an early age

that you could change the world, because I had changed mine."

According to Franklin, what makes Bolder unique are the stories; stories of givers like Allen Andersson, the serial entrepreneur and investor worth over \$300 million who gave away over 90 percent of his fortune to bring prosperity to Central America, home to some of the poorest people in the western hemisphere. There's also Abigail Disney (yep, that Disney), who gives away 50 percent of her net worth. At BolderGiving.org, you can find these stories and others, including those from people with modest to average incomes who have signed up to give away 25 to 50 percent of what they make each year.

As you get ready to give this year, his advice is to pick one group instead of many. "Instead of writing \$20 checks to five different places, write a \$100 check to a group you really care about. You'll get a thank you letter, be able to read the materials they send you, and stay engaged with the group you care about," he says.

Founded in 2007 by Christopher and Anne Ellinger, Bolder started off

slow, building from stories and contacts, but a grant from the Gates foundation in 2010 helped them get the jump-start they needed.

“Anyone can be bolder,” says Franklin. “Wherever you’re at, whatever you’re doing, you can make one change and affect the world differently.”