



*At age 14, Freddi Zeiler decided she wanted to make a difference in the world. There were so many charitable organizations to choose from that she didn't know where to start—so she decided to research them all. To make it easier for other children to make a difference and get involved, Freddi has broken down her findings in *A Kid's Guide to Giving*, an accessible guide to giving money and time, donating goods, and organizing charity events.*

## Q & A with Freddi Zeiler,

Author of *A Kid's Guide to Giving* (1-58476-489-9)

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**Q: You were very young when you started writing *A Kid's Guide to Giving*—why did you decide to start the book. What was your motivation?**

**A:** Initially, I was motivated by frustration. I wanted to donate to a charity, and didn't want to do it blindly, so I started doing research online. The information on these charity websites wasn't kid-friendly, so I started by taking notes on each one in my own words. I made a list of questions and emailed or called every one of the organizations to get the answers. Pretty soon I had a huge pile of information. My mom suggested that I make it into a book, to save others the trouble that I went through. I didn't have to think twice about doing it. I remember how difficult it was, and I didn't want others to have to experience what I did, so I took my frustration and turned it into something productive.

**Q: Why does giving & volunteerism mean so much to you? Are there any stories that you would like to share?**

**A:** I love the feeling I get from giving, but that's not the reason I do it. It means so much to me because it should. I see it as my responsibility as a human being on this planet to give back to a world that has given me so much. I was working at an animal adoption program at a local farmer's market once when I was in high school, and I got so attached to the dog I was taking care of that I convinced my aunt to come and adopt her! I get very involved in my work, and seeing that I've made even a small difference makes all of my time and energy worth it.

**Q: What advice would you give to kids who want to start giving?**

**A:** My best advice for a kid who wants to give is to find something that inspires them. When you are passionate about a cause, you can use that passion to make change. And remember, no change is too small.

**Q: What charities mean the most to you? Why?**

**A:** That's a difficult question. I know many people who have a particular cause that they are extremely dedicated too, but I'm still looking for mine. Issues involving children are very important to me. When I was younger, I'd watch the news and see images of kids my age suffering from hunger or poverty. I talked to my parents about doing something when I was about 12 or 13. They suggested I sponsor a child through Save the Children, so I did. I was assigned a girl named Myrlene. She was three years old, and lived in Haiti. I wrote letters to her every month and gave money for her food and education for several years, until her community was stabilized and Save the Children could move on to another area. I kept her picture on my desk as my motivation, a reminder of the difference I was making.

**Q: What do you think is the best way to encourage kids (and adults!) to start giving?**

**A:** I think most people want to give, but when something doesn't affect us directly, it's easy to forget that it's a problem. It's important to be aware of global issues, as well as local ones. I don't think kids need encouragement, but rather to be told that the world needs their help, and that it is in their power to make a change.

**Q: What did it take to pull this book together? What did you think of the process?**

**A:** It took a lot of help! My family helped me a lot in the beginning. My sisters made phone calls, and my parents helped me to understand the financial side of charities. As far as the publishing industry goes, I don't think I will be able to thank all the people who have helped me. Putting a book together is definitely a team effort. Just because my name is on the front doesn't mean I did it myself—far from it.

**Q: What advice would you give to kids who want to write a book?**

**A:** Writing a book is hard, but it's not impossible if you care enough about the project to see it all the way through. I didn't realize that it would take me 7 years to get my book published. There were times when I wanted to quit and just throw it all away because I was overwhelmed, but every time I felt like that, I'd imagine the people who could benefit from or become inspired by my book. It wasn't a school project, and there wasn't a due date. Nobody told me I had to write a book. I did it because I wanted to.

**Q: What do you hope that this book will accomplish—do you think that it will make a difference?**

**A:** I'm optimistic; I do think it will make a difference. I hope it inspires kids to care—to go into the world aware of their power to help. It's easy to fall into apathy or feel like one person can't make a difference. I want to inspire others. That is my goal.

**Q: You're in college now, what are you studying & where do you plan to go from here? Will giving stay a part of your life?**

**A:** I'm studying Art History right now, and I will probably focus in Medieval or Baroque art. After I graduate, I plan to take a year off to work and save money. Then, I would either like to go to Graduate School and get a Ph.D. in Art History, and someday work in a gallery, or go to art school to do Photojournalism, and work for an organization like National Geographic, where I could combine my love of animals and science with my interest in photography, travel, and education of the public in global issues. Art history and photography are my two greatest passions, and I still have not managed to choose between them. But no matter what I do, giving will always be an important part of my life. If I don't feel like I'm giving enough with my career, I will find ways to contribute outside of it. I believe that I can pursue my own dreams and give to others at the same time.

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*A Kid's Guide to Giving* is published by innovativeKids® and was developed in conjunction with By Kids For Kids.

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