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Harry Jaffe

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## Final feel-good moment for '08

By: [Harry Jaffe](#)  
 Examiner Columnist  
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Christmas is so yesterday, and there are only six more tomorrows left in 2008. Six more days to reach into your pockets and donate funds to worthy charities.

Lord knows there are a zillion deserving, big league causes, from CARE international to March of Dimes. But for those of us who want to donate closer to home and give money to small organizations where a few dollars will count, here are a few of my favorites. I have investigated each to make sure they have small talented staffs and have direct impact for good:

First on my list is FORCE — Friends of Rock Creek Park Environment.

Rock Creek is a small waterway with few friends and too much cruddy water running off roofs and sidewalks into its streambed. The nation's capital is known for the Potomac River, but it is better defined by the creek that runs north to south through its center like a funnel, wide at the Maryland line narrowing into its mouth where it drains into the Potomac.

FORCE is a young environmental group dedicated to keeping the creek clear and its banks clean. Want bang for your buck? Worry about donations being frittered away on staff and bureaucracy? FORCE has a staff of one: Executive Director Beth Mullin. No office expenses: Mullin works from her home. But this is no funky organization. Mullin is an environmental lawyer who worked for years at the Environmental Protection Agency. FORCE has successfully gotten grants to turn concrete into green space, it organizes community forays into the creek to clear invasive plants, it marks sewers with stickers to remind us that they empty into Rock Creek, its board members testify before the City Council. If you agree that we need to quit dumping raw sewage into the creek and the Potomac, support FORCE.

You can donate through [friendsofrockcreek.org](http://friendsofrockcreek.org), or you can mail a check to FORCE, P.O. Box 42680, Washington, D.C. 20015.


A great way to have direct impact on the lives of children in the Washington region is to donate to the DC Youth Orchestra Program. Like FORCE, DCYOP is small and lean but has a direct impact. Approaching its 50th year, the youth orchestra is the largest in the region. It provides instruments and lessons to 600 kids. It turns no one away. Its students perform in ensembles and full orchestras; they travel the world and perform at the Kennedy Center. But the orchestra needs a new home. It has grown out of Coolidge High, where I took my daughter for lessons years ago.

To donate or volunteer, go to [dcyop.org](http://dcyop.org).

Community Council for the Homeless at Friendship Place meets my standards for using a small staff to make lives better. Operating from its base on Wisconsin Avenue, it uses direct action and an array of support services to help homeless folks into permanent housing, jobs and productive lives. Donate through [cchfp.org](http://cchfp.org). Back to Rock Creek, here's a twofer: Contribute to FORCE and, to better your bottom line, take a walk in the park.

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