

Philanthropy for the masses

Willamette Week's annual giving program engages a younger crowd of community-minded donors

BY ISRAEL BAYER
STAFF WRITER

The Give!Guide, created by the Willamette Week in 2004, started by raising \$20,000 for a handful of local nonprofits. Nine years later, it helps raise more than \$1.5 million dollars for more than 100 local organizations. The groups span the fields of animal services, the arts, community, education, environment health and wellness social action and youths.

The mission of the Give!Guide is to instill an annual giving habit in Portlanders under the age of 36. Equally important is the guide's goal to raise as much money as possible for the nonprofits profiled online at wweek.com/giveguide.

Street Roots, which is among the nonprofits in the Give!Guide, sat down with Nick Johnson, the guide's executive director, to talk about the project.

Israel Bayer: Tell us about the Give!Guide.

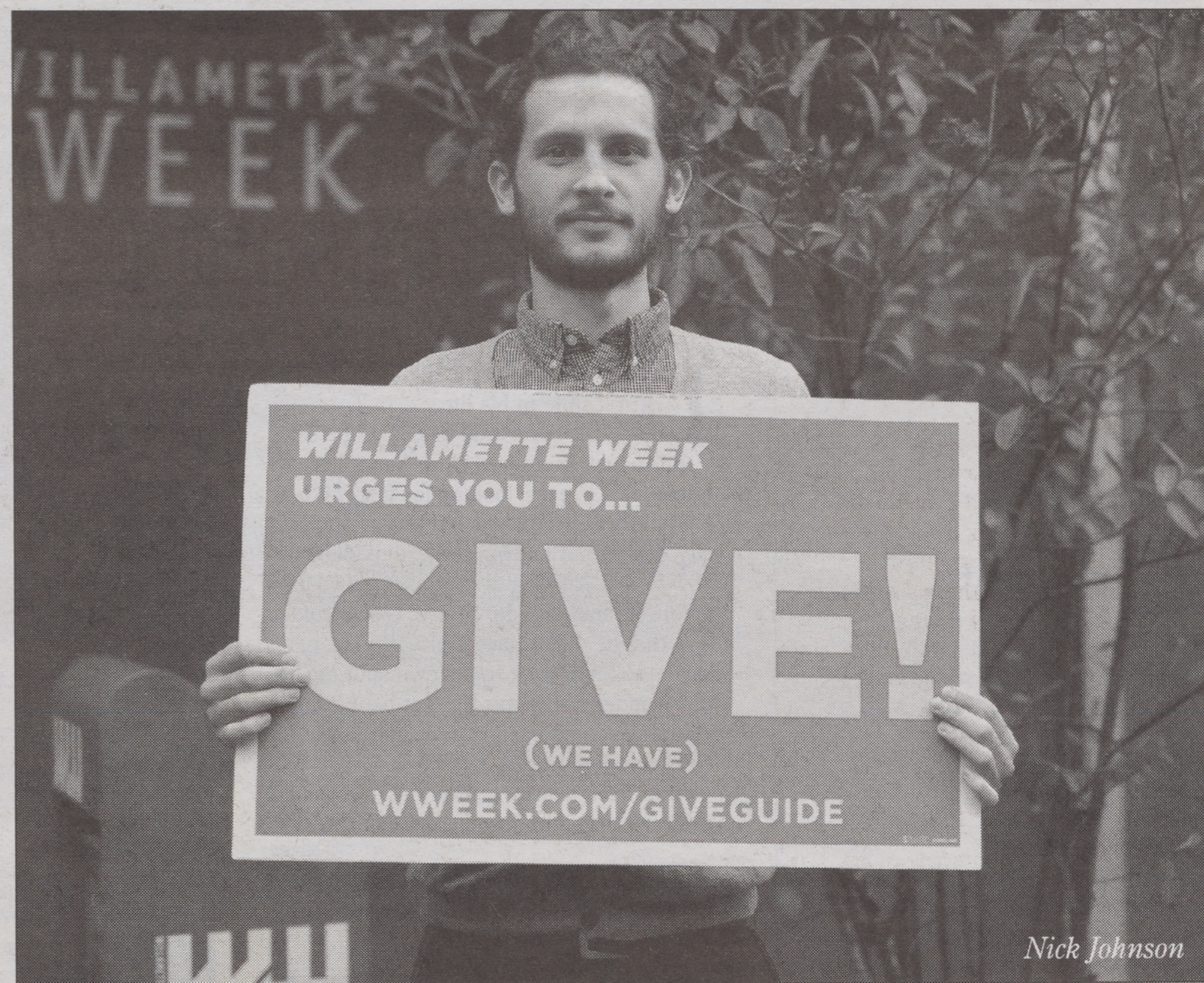
Nick Johnson: The goal of the Give!Guide is to create a platform to compel the Willamette Week's readership to give back to the community and engage individuals in their civic duty.

It's also meant to encourage people under 36 to give at a younger age. We know that if younger people give a donation, even if it's only \$10, they are more likely to give throughout their entire lifetime.

I.B.: Why should young people and others give to nonprofits in the Give!Guide?

N.J.: Ultimately, because it's our city, it's your city. The nonprofits working throughout Portland are creating a better Portland. We have so many great groups working on a range of different issues that make up the Portland experience.

On a personal level, your readers probably have a peer, friend or a family member who works at a nonprofit. If that's the case, you know that maybe your friend doesn't always have the time or the ability to hang out or do things that many folks just take for granted because they are so dedicated to a specific cause. You can make a real statement to that friend by making a donation to the nonprofit they are working for. It says that I admire and respect the fact that you are so dedicated to the work



Nick Johnson

PHOTO BY V. KAPOOR

you do. I would encourage people to realize that by giving a small donation to your friend or family member's nonprofit, you are saying I care. We all only have so much money and a small donation means a lot.

I.B.: The platform is also set up in a way that makes it fun to give. I go on the website planning to give to two groups and ending up giving to five.

N.J.: Absolutely. We've worked hard to make it easy and fun for people to give. You don't have to be super rich to give money to your favorite groups. It can be as little as \$10.

When we combine forces and have more than 100 nonprofits all working together to help make the city a better place, it sends a very strong message.

It's our goal to open doorways to different groups of people and donors. We don't look at it as competition for nonprofits, but instead as a collaborative effort towards helping the city. We are helping introduce people to different groups in new ways. The average donor at the Give!Guide is giving to three nonprofits.

The concept is unique because more and more people are becoming used to this kind of crowdsourcing and online giving. You see it in the political world and with groups like Kickstarter. Using the right technology and social media, we can think about inspiring people and communicating in new ways.

I.B.: What's also interesting is that you're featuring a wide range of organizations in different stages of their own maturity.

N.J.: A lot of larger nonprofits in the guide have visibility citywide. At the same time, there are a lot of smaller nonprofits in the guide that are doing great work and don't have the same kind of marketing platform or donor development. It really helps the smaller groups cut their teeth and develop a more robust development plan and connection with the community. It's great to see the small and the large groups all working together towards a collective good.

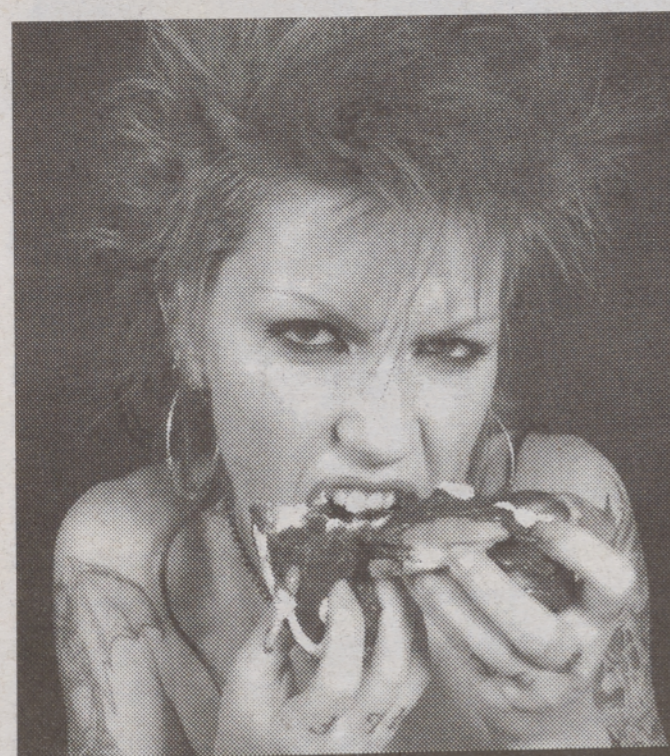
I.B.: Part of the Give!Guide is recognizing young leaders through the Skidmore Prize. Can you talk a bit more about this?

N.J.: We believe we should recognize younger people who work at nonprofits who may be turning down opportunities to work in the private sector and are making a personal sacrifice for a greater cause.

Each year, we recognize four people with an award and a \$4,000 cash prize for being great leaders in the community. We need good leaders and we need individuals to stay in the nonprofit sector.

I.B.: Anything else you would like to add?

N.J.: Please look at the nonprofits in the Give!Guide. They are all doing amazing work. Almost all of you have \$10 to give to one or more of these groups, and I highly recommend you do so.



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