

Next week, take time out to hug a nonprofit

VIEWPOINT

MICHAEL ALLEN

Every day for the past 25 years that I have lived in Washington, my life — and my family's — has been enriched by the work of D.C. area nonprofit organizations that make this one of the most vibrant and interesting regions in the country and provide a vital safety net for our most vulnerable brothers and sisters.

But I don't always take the time, as I should, to appreciate their work. Perhaps you don't either.

We can all make up for that on "Give to the Max Day" on Nov. 9. On that day, we can all go online to give2max.org and make a contribution to our favorite charitable causes. The effort, led by the Community Foundation for the National Capital Region, United Way of the National Capital Area and Razoo, seeks to replicate similar efforts in other parts of the country to kick off the charitable giving season with a focused day of community giving and support for a broad range of nonprofits. More than 1,000 are registered and will benefit from individual contributions and additional cash awards for those mobilizing the most support.

The participating groups represent virtually every type of nonprofit imaginable — including many that my family benefited from when our kids were young. Among them are organizations such as Glen Echo Park, where our children graduated from the carousel to the puppet company to Adventure Theatre, and Joy of Motion Dance Center, which nurtured our daughter's love of dance. In their teen years, our kids played basketball and soccer at Jelleff Boys & Girls Club and volunteered at Bread for the City, Iona Senior Services and Veronica House, which is run by the Community Council for the Homeless.

As a family, we have enjoyed countless bicycle rides made possible by the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail. With the older kids off at college, we

have more time for movies at the Avalon Theatre, or performances at any number of terrific local theaters or visits to the city's many museums.

As the economy continues to challenge us all, many of us have hunkered down and tightened our belts. At the same time, Give to the Max Day reminds us that our community is made up of thousands of nonprofit organizations that together employ roughly 16 percent of the D.C. workforce, deliver vital community services, give voice to the people they serve, advance solutions for challenges facing society and ultimately contribute to our vibrant community.

This year's giving season takes place in the shadow of funding reductions from government and decisions by Fannie Mae and the Freddie Mac Foundation to wind down or substantially scale back the support on which many groups have depended. Having served on the boards of several local nonprofits — Pathways to Housing, Palisades Village and Yachad — I understand the increased demands on our local nonprofits all too well.

Through a web-based approach pioneered by the online fundraiser Razoo, Give to the Max makes it easy for casual and first-time contributors to participate, for as little as \$10. Of course, the sky is the limit.

Here's the secret about Give to the Max Day: It gives us the opportunity, on a single day, to make a bold statement about how important nonprofits are to our lives. Even if we are fairly private about our philanthropy, when we all contribute on a single day, we show the power of community and we can encourage others to join in a broad effort to improve the lives of all our neighbors.

So join me in hugging a nonprofit on Nov. 9. Make a list of the nonprofits that have enriched your life. Then, go to give2max.org, and do what I plan to do: Give to the Max.

Michael Allen, an attorney with the civil rights firm of Relman, Dane & Colfax, is a resident of the Palisades.