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News: 10 Extra Energized Boston Charities

By Elizabeth Saucier



(Image from [b Positive Project](#))

In the case of charities, the more the merrier. While it's significant to give back to your community in any way you can, a more direct effort—acting, rather than indirectly donating—can be a much more invigorating experience. No fancy galas, stuffy auctions, or raffles here. Since you may be saving your pennies, a good option is to go out and *do* instead of donating. There are so many philanthropic initiatives in Boston that could use a hand, from helping families in need to simply spreading positivity. The following 10 upbeat charity projects are a great place to start.

b Positive Project

According to Stephen Martin, the founder of the [b Positive Project](#), the purpose of the relatively new group is to inspire people to be positive in mind, body, and spirit. The project's fun events scheduled for 2011 thus far include races to raise funds for foundations helping those affected by cancer. Just last December they held an Ugly Sweater party, the tickets for which paid for over 50 seriously ill children from the Starlight Children's Foundation to go to a Celtics game.

Project Bread

[Project Bread](#) essentially began when the Greater Boston Walk for Hunger did in 1969. The [Walk for Hunger](#) has grown from raising thousands of dollars during its inception to raising millions of dollars to assist hungry people in Massachusetts. The walk takes place this year on May 1. Keep an eye out for Project Bread's Strike Out Hunger Bowl-a-thon this year as well.

The Greater Boston Food Bank

At age eight, Catherine D'Amato helped feed the hungry at her father's restaurant. Fast forward decades later to D'Amato doing the same but on a much larger scale as president and CEO of [The Greater Boston Food Bank](#). The food bank feeds over 500,000 people annually in Massachusetts, and includes events like running in the Boston Marathon and free chamber music concerts. At the latter, you are encouraged to donate canned goods while enjoying some live classical music.

Community Servings

In his hometown of South Hadley, David Winters began assisting with church meals to feed the needy. Years later, he became the CEO of [Community Servings](#) in Jamaica Plain that now delivers 3,340 meals each week to homebound clients with life-threatening illnesses. The project's events are ongoing, including volunteering to prepare and deliver food, and a Sponsor My 'Stache fundraiser on March 2, 2011.

Red Sox Foundation

If sports are more your thing, there are opportunities to do some good alongside your favorite baseball team. As the official team charity of the Red Sox, the [Red Sox Foundation](#) focuses on the health, education, and recreation of New England children and families. The "Foundation Nation" provides academically gifted students with scholarships, orchestrates fundraisers, and its Red Sox Rookie League introduces baseball to young children. If you're a fan of Kevin Youkilis, check out his charitable organization, [Hits for Kids](#), too.

Boston Centers for Youth and Families

[Boston Centers for Youth and Families](#) (BCYF) have not one project but many [key initiatives](#) to benefit Boston's children, youth, and families. There are upcoming February sports activities for children, and BCYF is even hosting R.O.C.K. It!!! for Boston youth, an event with special guests, performances, and resources to help prepare and occupy teens for the summer. If [Tom Brady](#) can do it, so can you!

Horizons for Homeless Children

In an effort to end the cycle of homelessness in so many families, [Horizons for Homeless Children](#) provides shelters where children can play, read, and learn. Its volunteers and employees also teach parents to best take care of their children, and to better themselves through job training and college courses. Since 1990, more than 14,000 Boston residents have been trained as volunteer [Playspace Activity Leaders](#). You can become a volunteer, or participate in annual conferences that generate networking and new company strategies.

Pan-Mass Challenge

As a charity ride for bicyclists of all skill levels, the [Pan-Massachusetts Challenge](#) includes routes ranging from 47 to 192 miles beginning in southern

Massachusetts and ending near or along the Cape. The money raised this year, on August 6 & 7, goes directly to the Jimmy Fund and the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute to assist cancer research and treatment, and help those suffering with the disease. As a PMC fundraiser, you help researchers come closer to finding a cure.

Best Buddies Challenge

On June 4, 2011, bicyclists will be traveling from Boston through the New England countryside, and Olympic gold medalist Carl Lewis will lead runners on a 5K run. The premise of the [Best Buddies Challenge: Hyannis Port](#) is to raise funds to provide opportunities for one-on-one friendships, employment, and leadership development for those with intellectual disabilities. However, this isn't your average athletic event. Once you arrive at the finish line, you'll have a gift bag, professional massage, and lobster bake waiting for you!

Boston Marathon

For the more independent and creative doers, you can develop your own project by raising funds for a charity of your choice through the [Boston Marathon](#). As the world's oldest annual marathon, the Boston Marathon spans from Hopkinton to Boston, and raises funds for numerous [charities](#). It takes place on April 14, 2011, but registration is closed for this year. However, as a volunteer for the marathon, you still get up close to the action, and you can also attend the Post-Race Party.