



Teacher Amanda Tylicki used DonorsChoose to get new carpet for her San Jose, Cal., classroom.

What \$1,000 can do

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PHOTOGRAPH BY ANGELA WYANT

Help teachers help **STUDENTS**

AWORN, mended carpet for Amanda Tylicki's precious second-graders?

Never.

After spotting the unsightly scrap, Tylicki posted a proposal for a new rug on DonorsChoose.org, a Web site that connects donors with small schoolroom projects. A few months later, her kids were gathered on a bright, cushy carpet for story hour. "The budget is tight at a school like mine," says Tylicki, who is starting her fourth year as a teacher at Horace Cureton Elementary School, in East San Jose, Cal. "It's wonderful to have a resource like DonorsChoose."

Founded by Charles Best, a social-studies teacher in a public high school in the Bronx, N.Y., **DonorsChoose** began as a way to get supplies into public schools in low-income areas. "I figured that there were people out there who wanted to improve public schools but were skeptical about writing a check for \$100 and not seeing where their money was going," says Best.

Giving through DonorsChoose feels as personal as bringing cupcakes to your kid's classroom. You browse the requests—say, for a book cart or science equipment—and send a donation to the one that appeals to you most. You can kick in part of the funding or all of it. Once the target amount

has been met, DonorsChoose buys the materials and ships them to the school.

What kind of school supplies does \$1,000 buy? For about that amount, you could present a special-education class in San Francisco with a laptop computer and software. Or you could divvy up your donation and buy dress-up clothing for kindergartners in Staten Island, N.Y. (\$535) and a digital camera for third-graders in Thomasville, N.C. (\$292).

On the receiving end, the class puts together a packet that includes thank-you notes from the kids, a letter from the teacher and pictures of the whole gang using the resource. The packet goes to DonorsChoose, which forwards it to the donor. "With people who want to be anonymous, we address the letters 'Dear Donor,'" says Tylicki. "I've heard kids say, 'Donor is so nice. I really want to meet Donor.'"

Tylicki's proposals have also snagged new crayons for her students, as well as \$7,000 to send 14 of them to summer science camp. "DonorsChoose has revolutionized my ability to teach," she says. As for the kids, "the process tells them, One person who didn't even know us just made our day by giving us a present. Think of how kind that is."

—JANE BENNETT CLARK