



HELP DESK

Geeks Bearing Gifts

LAWYERS AND CONSULTANTS have long lent their time, pro bono, to those in need. Why not computer engineers? Last fall, Charles Best, founder of **DonorsChoose.org**, a nonprofit Web site that connects teachers in need of supplies with individual donors, called **Yahoo!** (page 76) with an unusual request: Could the Web powerhouse please loan him six of its most talented techies for three months at a time to help redesign his site?

Yahoo co-founder David Filo immediately signed on. The first group of volunteers is six weeks into the program.

Yahoo sees the contribution not just as philanthropy but as a tool in the red-hot tech talent wars. Its community relations director, Meg Garlinghouse, describes most of the company's hires as "predisposed to care for the community." A Peace Corps veteran herself, Garlinghouse thinks this will help Yahoo entice the most gifted geeks. They should help DonorsChoose's 19 employees catch up with the escalating demand for its services. Says Best: "Our current platform is still built around the Web site I commissioned four years ago, when we had no idea we'd grow beyond the Bronx." His goal is to make DonorsChoose available to every public school teacher in the nation by fall 2007.

—Jessi Hempel