

RANKING IS BASED ON AVERAGE ANNUAL CASH SUPPORT FOR ORGANIZATIONS FROM 2021 TO 2023.

|   |                                             |                 |
|---|---------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | UNITED WAY WORLDWIDE                        | \$2,616,471,840 |
| 2 | ALSAC/ST. JUDE CHILDREN'S RESEARCH HOSPITAL | \$2,265,394,090 |
| 3 | SALVATION ARMY                              | \$1,631,457,132 |
| 4 | THE Y                                       | \$1,339,541,000 |
| 5 | COMPASSION INTERNATIONAL                    | \$1,129,731,422 |
| 6 | BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF AMERICA               | \$1,092,092,989 |
| 7 | HABITAT FOR HUMANITY                        | \$1,002,535,449 |
| 8 | STEP UP FOR STUDENTS                        | \$897,021,749   |
| 9 | AMERICAN NATIONAL RED CROSS                 | \$874,795,414   |

# Pivot, Change, Pivot Again

The 100 biggest fundraising groups are shifting strategies after half a decade of upheaval. What can they tell us about the state of raising money today?



**1 UNITED WAY WORLDWIDE**  
Raised \$2.62 billion

FOR MANY YEARS, donors loved to hear from the girls and young women they supported through Plan International, a humanitarian charity that works globally. Child sponsorships fueled giving to the nearly century-old organization and helped make it a fundraising juggernaut.

But these are no ordinary times. Much of the nonprofit world is headed into the second half of the decade rattled by the shock waves of the first half: the pandemic, a volatile economy, steep declines in everyday giving, and most recently, steep cuts in government funding. In response, organizations are tweaking or even tearing up their fundraising playbooks, trying out new tactics and strategies.

By **RASHEEDA  
CHILDRESS**

At Plan International, donor sponsorships of individual children have been losing steam. Donors are interested in more community-based solutions. And like many nonprofits this year, the organization lost much of its government funding, which used to make up 40 percent of its revenue. Even before that, the organization began investing more in major gifts, hoping to secure more unrestricted dollars in particular. The goal is to meet donors where they are, says Katherine Williford, chief development officer for Plan USA, the group's American fundraising arm.

"Child sponsorship continues to be a really important pillar," she says. "But we're recognizing now that we've perhaps not invested as much time and energy in major donor fundraising as we could have."

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UNITED WAY WORLDWIDE/UNITED WAY OF CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS



|    |                                |               |
|----|--------------------------------|---------------|
| 10 | SAMARITAN'S PURSE              | \$809,242,057 |
| 11 | NATURE CONSERVANCY             | \$751,747,901 |
| 12 | DOCTORS WITHOUT BORDERS USA    | \$684,878,778 |
| 13 | U.S. FUND FOR UNICEF           | \$682,724,023 |
| 14 | PLAN INTERNATIONAL             | \$676,324,962 |
| 15 | HEALTHWELL FOUNDATION          | \$649,061,978 |
| 16 | AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY        | \$617,232,321 |
| 17 | CRU                            | \$610,170,333 |
| 18 | AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION     | \$572,788,894 |
| 19 | CARE                           | \$499,976,129 |
| 20 | INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE | \$480,566,794 |
| 21 | BROAD INSTITUTE                | \$458,102,815 |



COURTESY FELLOWSHIP OF CHRISTIAN ATHLETES

**65** **FELLOWSHIP  
OF CHRISTIAN  
ATHLETES**  
Raised \$178 million

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## Fundraising Powerhouses

What are the biggest fundraising organizations? And what do their shifts in recent years illustrate about the fundraiser's job in these tumultuous times?

The *Chronicle* set out to find answers through our America's Favorite Charities project, which identifies the 100 organizations that raise the most in private support — cash and stock gifts only — from individuals, foundations, and companies. Groups on the list all raise hundreds of millions of dollars, if not billions. They range from the very old (including the 179-year-old Smithsonian Institution, which earned the No. 39 spot in our ranking) to the very young, like the 11-year-old Obama Foundation (No. 61). Plan International, which raises more than \$600 million annually, was 14th on the list.

Organizations are ranked based on the average amount they raised annually from 2021 to 2023, the most recent year for which data is available for all groups. We analyzed three years of data to avoid the fluctuations caused by once-in-a-lifetime mega-gifts. To focus on groups for which donations are the primary fuel for charitable work — as opposed to those that rely heavily on earned income — we did not include medical centers, colleges, or universities, whose cash support accounted for less than 50 percent of revenue.

The 100 nonprofits on our list together raised more than \$38 billion in 2023. That's roughly one out of every 15 charitable dollars donated that year, which means those groups have ample opportunity to analyze giving trends and donor behavior.

While our data set predates the second Trump

administration, many organizations had already been shifting strategies, whether in response to the tumult of the early 2020s or the upending of traditional giving patterns. Even as many changed their fundamentals, they also preached a consistency that's a golden rule of fundraising: At times like these, it's critical to stay true to your organization's mission and communicate clearly to donors how they can make a difference.

Planned Parenthood (No. 29) has seen a surge in gifts since the start of the second Trump administration. Donors know the organization is working to provide sexual and reproductive health care and access across the country, says Leora Hanser, the organization's chief development officer.

While some nonprofits may worry what they say will make them a target, Hanser says it doesn't work to be silent about your mission. "An organization that appears to be veering away or hiding in the shadows right now, I think it is going to be really hard for them to be out raising the dollars."

## A Volatile Time

Like nonprofits across the country, America's Favorite Charities aren't sure what's going to happen next.

"It's a real perfect storm of economic uncertainty and political volatility," says Caite Gilmore, vice president of development at the Obama Foundation. "It's left a lot of nonprofits struggling, and we are no exception. A lot of our major and corporate donors are in a wait-and-see posture."

For Gilmore, that means spending more time listening. "Trying to understand the reasons behind

the 'not now,'" she says. "Then just being patient, staying connected with them, keeping them inspired, and staying relevant so that when the time is right and things settle, they will come back."

That said, everyday and midlevel donors continue to provide support. The organization's fundraisers are telling them about blended contributions that involve a cash gift now and a bequest commitment — "ways to really stretch a donor's giving," Gilmore says.

Feeding America (No. 24) lost federal funding that its network food banks counted on.

"We don't think that traditional philanthropy is an immediate replacement for broad cuts in federal funding and programs," says Casey Marsh, chief development officer.

Still, the organization is looking for new ways to bring in money. It launched a community response fund for supporters to help offset funding gaps. Feeding America also plans to sell carbon credits to support its work to reduce food waste, a significant source of greenhouse gases.

"That's an attempt to diversify funding and build long-term sustainability," Marsh says. "We are not counting on that as a silver bullet that will result in funds that could replace our generous donors and partners. But it is a way to test and to learn and to explore possibilities from earned-income revenue models."

## Big Gifts vs. Small-Dollar Support

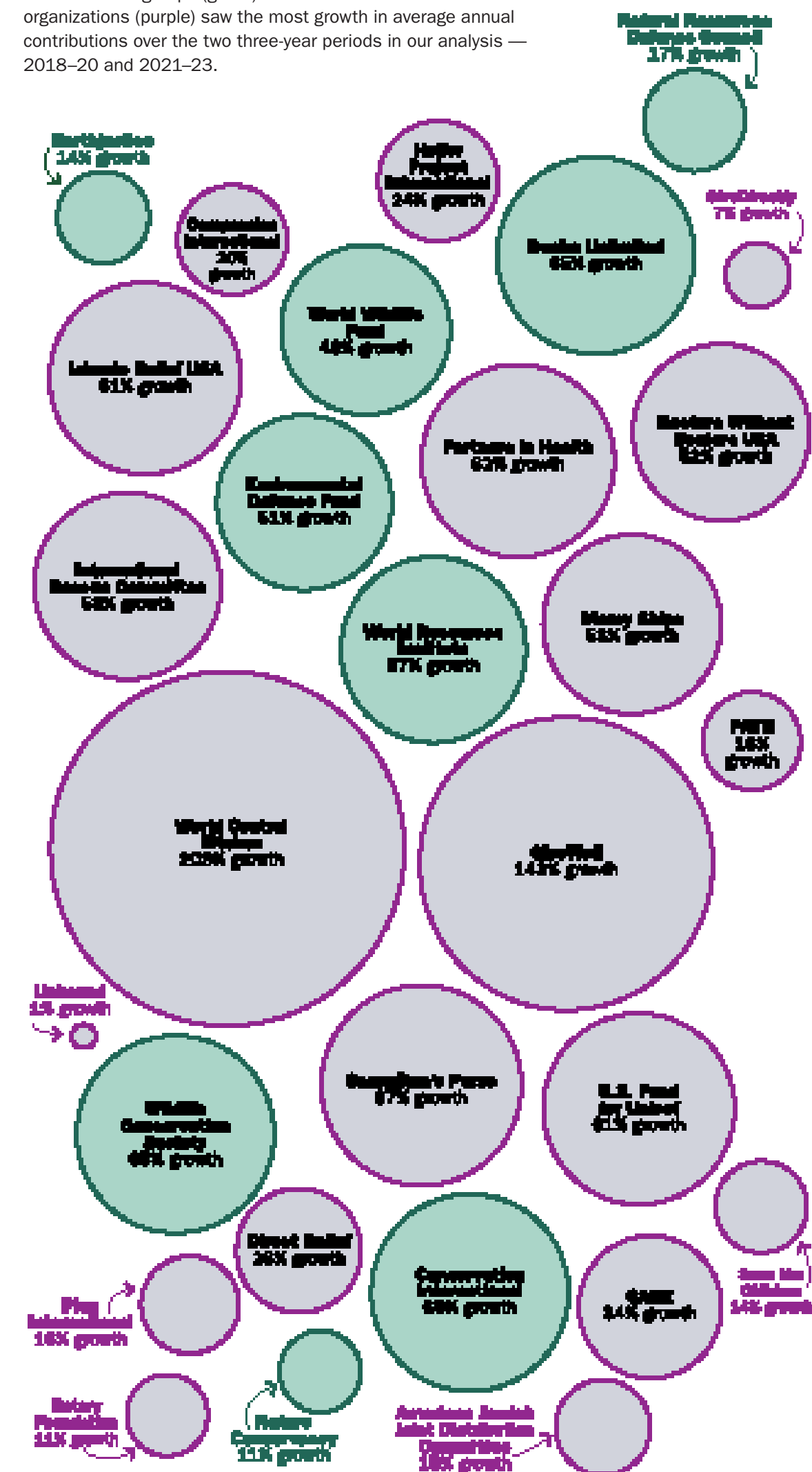
Many of the organizations on the list grapple with finding the right mix of small-dollar supporters and major donors.

Peer-to-peer fundraising is critical for the

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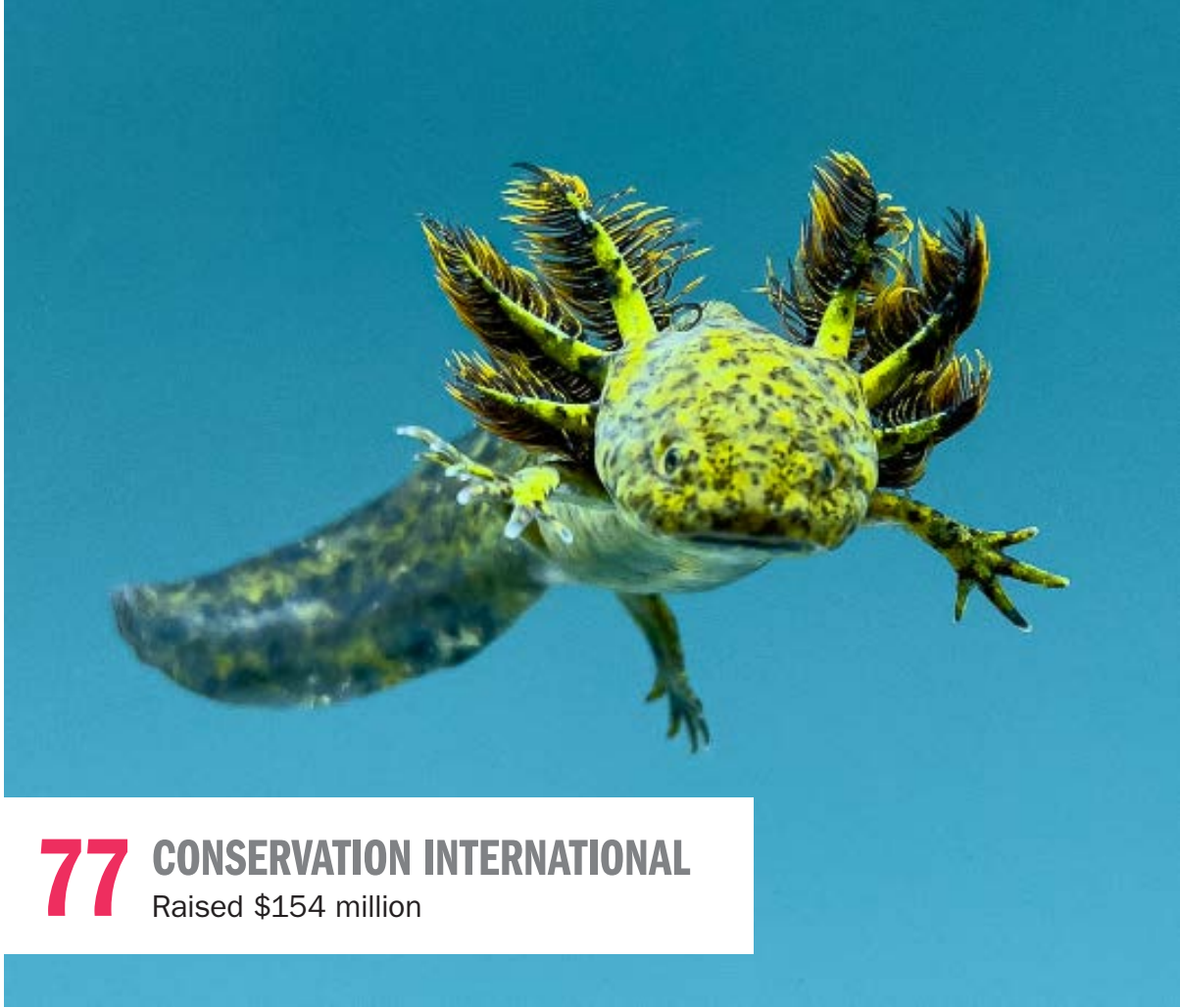
## Hot Causes

Environmental groups (green) and international and disaster-relief organizations (purple) saw the most growth in average annual contributions over the two three-year periods in our analysis — 2018–20 and 2021–23.





|    |                                                            |               |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| 22 | SAVE THE CHILDREN                                          | \$425,201,508 |
| 23 | WORLD VISION                                               | \$416,123,876 |
| 24 | FEEDING AMERICA                                            | \$402,793,071 |
| 25 | BLOOD CANCER UNITED (FKA<br>LEUKEMIA AND LYMPHOMA SOCIETY) | \$399,678,872 |
| 26 | YOUNG LIFE                                                 | \$397,546,851 |
| 27 | GOOD DAYS                                                  | \$389,895,767 |
| 28 | ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION                                    | \$386,980,756 |
| 29 | PLANNED PARENTHOOD FEDERATION<br>OF AMERICA                | \$362,779,104 |
| 30 | ROTARY FOUNDATION                                          | \$354,690,724 |
| 31 | AMERICAN KIDNEY FUND                                       | \$346,323,001 |
| 32 | WOUNDED WARRIOR PROJECT                                    | \$343,754,554 |



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77 CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL  
Raised \$154 million

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Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research (No. 34). Many people hear the term "peer-to-peer fundraising" and automatically think walkathons or bicycle races. The Michael J. Fox Foundation does that, but it also encourages supporters to raise money on Facebook and plan "do-it-yourself" fundraisers that let them create their own events.

"They're all different, but they put the power of the fundraiser in the hand of the individual who starts it," says Lisa Boudreau, the group's chief development officer. "It builds community in a really unique way."

Case in point: A first-time fundraising family hosted a "Dancing in the Moonlight" party at their Cape Cod home and raised more than \$200,000. Boudreau says there's been an uptick in Facebook fundraising, raking in \$10 million from that alone since 2020. The foundation encourages people close to the mission to rally friends and loved ones

to the cause, often with small-dollar gifts.

"Last year we raised \$203 million, and the median gift was \$50," Boudreau says. "We do attract a large swath of people giving relatively small dollars that add up. We have less than 100 people in our community who've given a million dollars over their lifetime."

The Obama Foundation started in 2014 with a goal to raise \$1.6 billion by the time the Obama Presidential Center opens in 2026. To get things off the ground, fundraisers focused their attention on big donors, says Gilmore.

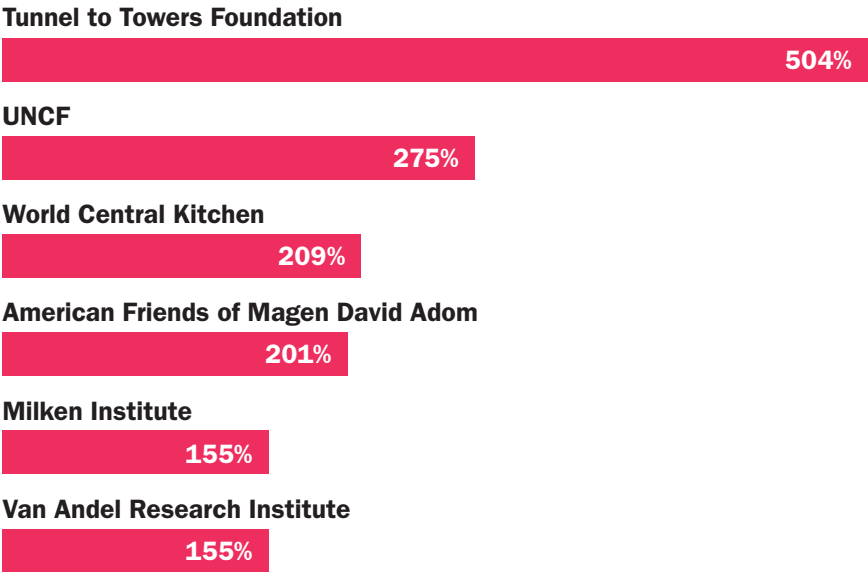
After gaining some traction, the organization branched out. "It was really important to us that, like President Obama's political campaigns, this capital campaign also be fueled by a lot of donors," she says. "So donors of all backgrounds and geographies, making gifts of all sizes."

Some organizations on the list have made the decision to lean into big gifts.

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Fastest-Growing Groups

We compared average annual giving to organizations over two three-year periods — 2018–20 and 2021–23 — to determine the groups where contributions increased the most.



# 7 Things We Learned From America’s Favorite Charities

What giving to the 100 organizations that raise the most money tells us about donation trends, donor behavior, and fundraising strategies

By DREW LINDSAY

THE 100 ORGANIZATIONS identified by the *Chronicle* as America’s Favorite Charities raise more than \$38 billion annually. What can their millions of contributions tell us about the donation trends, fundraising strategies, and macro forces — political, economic, and cultural — that influence giving?

For answers, we examined the growth or decline of giving to organizations based on the averages of their cash support over two three-year periods: 2018-20 and 2021-23, the latest year for which data is available for all organizations. It’s worth noting that the pandemic affected giving during these six years, and our analysis predates the volatility and uncertainty that has accompanied Donald Trump’s return to the White House.

Here are seven takeaways. Collectively, the groups that raised the most cash saw roughly average growth. All giving by Americans averaged over 2021-23 grew 23 percent from the previous three years, according to “Giving USA” figures. Only 46 of the 94 groups in our analysis with historical data topped that mark. Many older groups are feeling their age. America’s Favorite Charities are old — very old. Forty-two organizations on our list are at least 75 years old; 21 are more than 100. Average cash support to the centenarians was largely flat during the six years in our analysis.

Age has its benefits. These older groups are often household names that enjoy considerable trust and goodwill. Yet donors increasingly “are giving more and more to ideas and causes rather than out of institutional loyalty,” says Rick Happy, chair of CCS Fundraising, a consultancy that works with hundreds of organizations. Also, younger donors often believe that “the larger, older institutions may not be as dynamic.”

“The aura of something like the American Cancer Society only gets you so far,” says Kael Reicin, chief finance and strategy officer for the society (No. 16). “You have to deliver real value, real impact.”

Celebrities can fuel growth. Boldface names lead two of the 16 organizations on our list that were established in the 21st century and have climbed with incredible speed into the top 50. Giving to the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson’s Research (No. 34), created in 2000 by the *Back to the Future* actor, doubled as more venerable health groups saw little or no growth. (See below.) And the 15-year-old World Central Kitchen (No. 41) saw contributions climb more than 200 percent as its founder, chef José Andrés, and his crews turned up in disaster hotspots from Ukraine to Tornado Alley in the States.

Celebrity drives awareness and earned media, but Fox and Andrés are also strong leaders, says Tim Sarrantonio, chairman of AFP’s Fundraising Effectiveness Project and an executive with the Neon One fundraising consultancy.

Andrés “does such an amazing job elevating the people that are impacted or doing the work. It’s beautiful,” Sarrantonio says. “That’s why those organizations grow very quickly — because they de-center themselves as quickly as possible.”

The effectiveness of fundraising events — always a hot topic — remains an open question after the pandemic. When Covid hit, the American Cancer Society was already edging away from its heavy reliance on its 40-year-old Relay for Life, a series of community walk events. It used the pandemic pause to recalibrate and began investing more in major-gift and corporate fundraising. This year, it will organize about 1,700 events — down from 3,100 in 2019. It’s also adding more galas and golf tournaments to its event lineup, which communities have asked for, Reicin says.

“You ride the waves of growth, but if you don’t change, you suffer the consequences,” he says. “Like any organization, we have to listen to the community.”

Ducks Unlimited (No. 82), meanwhile, is doubling down on events. Even as the organization pared payroll during the pandemic’s lean times, it retained core event program staff. “We catapulted out of Covid,” says David Schuessler, national director of event fundraising. “I felt like we were first to market in a lot of communities because we were ready to take advantage of the fact that we were still fully staffed.”

This year, it will organize 5,400 events, up from around 4,000 before the pandemic. Driving those higher numbers are online events — auctions and raffles for trips, decoys, art, and other items — that it introduced for the first time during the pandemic.

Previously, online fundraising “was a bad word inside of Ducks Unlimited because we felt that it might cannibalize some of our event business,” Schuessler says. “We learned that it doesn’t.”

Health groups are trying to find new footing. The 14 health organizations on our list saw giving climb just 8 percent, with contributions declining at six of the organizations. Many of these groups rely heavily on participatory events — walk- and bike-athons, for instance — that shuttered during the pandemic and were still recovering in 2023, the last year of our analysis.

Several say donations improved in 2024 and 2025 as Covid fears eased and participation grew. The American Heart Association (No. 18) saw its



**41** WORLD CENTRAL KITCHEN  
Raised \$297 million

WORLD CENTRAL KITCHEN/WCK.ORG

cash support climb 6 percent in 2024. Companies — always key to connecting the organization to grassroots supporters — are joining walks to build community among their remote or hybrid workers, says Suzie Upton, chief operating officer. “They use them as a way for people to come together.”

Two organizations rebranded. Earlier this year, the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society took up the name Blood Cancer United (No. 25). JDRF, once known as the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, rebooted in 2024 as Breakthrough T1D (No. 63) — a recognition that medicine has discovered that type 1 diabetes affects adults as well as children.

Breakthrough T1D also has invested heavily in big-gift programs. The pandemic “reminded us how important diversified fundraising is,” says chief global development officer Kathleen Seitz. In the past year, it has netted four pledges of \$25 million or more, and its fiscal 2025 fundraising topped \$270 million, a record for the group.

It continues its walk events, which Seitz says are critical to “field engagement” — more than half of its 32 gifts of \$1 million or more this year were made by donors who came to the group through events. But event proceeds now make up 40 percent of its revenues, down from 60 percent before the pandemic.

Disaster giving has shifted the landscape. More than a quarter of the 100 charities in our analysis work in disaster or international relief — the largest share of any cause.

Giving set records in the year following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, and the two-year war in Gaza has added to that. Islamic Relief USA (No. 85) and several Israel-support organizations saw significant growth in our analysis; cash support for Friends of the Israel Defense Forces (No. 80) grew 58 percent.

“The sums of money that Jews are giving to

Jewish causes has increased quite dramatically,” Jewish philanthropy historian Jack Wertheimer told *eJewishPhilanthropy* recently. “By my estimate, in the early 2020s, it was at least double what it was thought to be in 2014.”

The pandemic also created a global health emergency. “All the places we work in around the world were impacted by the pandemic,” says Gabriella Palmi, managing director of resource generation at Partners in Health (No. 57), the nearly 40-year-old group made famous by Tracy Kidder’s book *Mountains Beyond Mountains* about co-founder Paul Farmer.

Partners in Health doesn’t do emergency-response work and isn’t engaged in Ukraine or Gaza. But health threats have raised awareness about the organization’s focus on global health security and pandemic control, Palmi says. Emergencies organically bring the organization new donors — “We don’t invest in a lot of marketing,” she says — and underscore the need for systemic work that motivates the group’s hefty cadre of longtime supporters.

The environment heats up as an issue. When Julie Upsham started as a fundraiser at Conservation International (No. 77) in 2008, many donors didn’t even know what climate change was. Most Americans now see it as a crisis, says the organization’s vice president for individual giving.

Not coincidentally, six of the nine environmental groups on our list saw giving climb by roughly half or more. The highest fliers: Ducks Unlimited, Conservation International, and the Wildlife Conservation Society (No. 95), which each recorded 65 percent growth.

Conservation International positions itself as “radical” optimism, Upsham says. “People want to feel that hope as they’re doing something at whatever level they can.” ■



|                                                                                     |                                                                                  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>33</b><br>ASPCA<br>\$341,187,823                                                 | <b>44</b><br>ASSISTANCE FUND<br>\$281,668,784                                    |
| <b>34</b><br>MICHAEL J. FOX FOUNDATION FOR<br>PARKINSON’S RESEARCH<br>\$336,275,280 | <b>45</b><br>PATIENT ADVOCATE FOUNDATION<br>\$281,650,414                        |
| <b>35</b><br>AMERICAN JEWISH JOINT<br>DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE<br>\$332,395,716       | <b>46</b><br>METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART<br>\$280,109,440                         |
| <b>36</b><br>PEW CHARITABLE TRUSTS<br>\$331,169,297                                 | <b>47</b><br>WORLD RESOURCES INSTITUTE<br>\$269,816,271                          |
| <b>37</b><br>PATIENT ACCESS NETWORK<br>FOUNDATION<br>\$313,038,485                  | <b>48</b><br>LUTHERAN SERVICES OF AMERICA<br>\$260,857,418                       |
| <b>38</b><br>SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION<br>\$306,932,120                               | <b>49</b><br>UNCF<br>\$260,007,777                                               |
| <b>39</b><br>WORLD WILDLIFE FUND<br>\$305,413,347                                   | <b>50</b><br>MILKEN INSTITUTE<br>\$252,897,529                                   |
| <b>40</b><br>TUNNEL TO TOWERS FOUNDATION<br>\$302,312,798                           | <b>51</b><br>HILLSDALE COLLEGE<br>\$248,311,765                                  |
| <b>41</b><br>WORLD CENTRAL KITCHEN<br>\$296,836,131                                 | <b>52</b><br>INTERNATIONAL FELLOWSHIP OF<br>CHRISTIANS AND JEWS<br>\$237,803,073 |
| <b>42</b><br>ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENSE FUND<br>\$289,523,533                            | <b>53</b><br>EDUCATIONAL MEDIA FOUNDATION<br>\$230,861,823                       |
| <b>43</b><br>JEWISH FEDERATIONS OF<br>NORTH AMERICA<br>\$284,106,525                | <b>54</b><br>ACLU FOUNDATION<br>\$228,162,174                                    |
|                                                                                     | <b>55</b><br>UJA-FEDERATION OF NEW YORK<br>\$222,432,000                         |



|                                                                            |                                                                                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>56</b><br><b>PATH</b><br>\$215,378,531                                  | <b>68</b><br><b>CHILDFUND</b><br>\$171,539,159                                         |
| <b>57</b><br><b>PARTNERS IN HEALTH</b><br>\$208,812,238                    | <b>69</b><br><b>COVENANT HOUSE</b><br>\$166,108,644                                    |
| <b>58</b><br><b>NATURAL RESOURCES<br/>DEFENSE COUNCIL</b><br>\$208,479,395 | <b>70</b><br><b>GIVEWELL</b><br>\$165,294,023                                          |
| <b>59</b><br><b>SCHOLARSHIP AMERICA</b><br>\$208,068,278                   | <b>71</b><br><b>METROPOLITAN OPERA ASSOCIATION</b><br>\$164,417,017                    |
| <b>60</b><br><b>CHRISTIAN BROADCASTING NETWORK</b><br>\$205,521,061        | <b>72</b><br><b>WIKIMEDIA FOUNDATION</b><br>\$164,316,447                              |
| <b>61</b><br><b>OBAMA FOUNDATION</b><br>\$199,052,743                      | <b>73</b><br><b>HUMANE WORLD FOR ANIMALS<br/>(FKA HUMANE SOCIETY)</b><br>\$162,372,111 |
| <b>62</b><br><b>WYCLIFFE BIBLE TRANSLATORS</b><br>\$190,927,859            | <b>74</b><br><b>MERCY SHIPS</b><br>\$159,664,848                                       |
| <b>63</b><br><b>BREAKTHROUGH T1D (FKA JDRF)</b><br>\$190,404,120           | <b>75</b><br><b>DIRECT RELIEF</b><br>\$157,635,590                                     |
| <b>64</b><br><b>BOYS TOWN</b><br>\$180,762,192                             | <b>76</b><br><b>UNITED ISRAEL APPEAL</b><br>\$155,630,642                              |
| <b>65</b><br><b>FELLOWSHIP OF CHRISTIAN ATHLETES</b><br>\$177,657,458      | <b>77</b><br><b>CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL</b><br>\$153,817,730                        |
| <b>66</b><br><b>TEACH FOR AMERICA</b><br>\$175,706,920                     | <b>78</b><br><b>VAN ANDEL RESEARCH INSTITUTE</b><br>\$150,372,289                      |
| <b>67</b><br><b>EASTERSEALS</b><br>\$175,383,635                           | <b>79</b><br><b>DONORSCHOOSE.ORG</b><br>\$147,826,543                                  |

*Continued from Page 12*

The Nature Conservancy (No. 11) has a membership program in which grassroots donors can contribute via digital tools or direct mail or even by canvassing. But the lion's share of dollars comes from folks with deep pockets. In 2024, the organization raised about \$1.1 billion, of which \$720 million came from major and principal gift donors.

The environmental organization has boosted its fundraising by using analytics to determine which supporters are most likely to step up their giving.

"Because we're large and we have a million members, we do pretty sophisticated data analytics on those members," says Tom Neises, chief development officer at the Nature Conservancy. "We've built some of our own proprietary models on predictability, both for membership support and for likelihood of becoming a more significant supporter."

### Fundraising Dilemmas

A nonprofit can make the list of America's Favorite Charities — or even top it — and still face fundraising challenges.

The list is based on groups' fundraising from 2021 to 2023, as they climbed out of the pandemic emergency. We compared those numbers with the three-year period heading into Covid, 2018 to 2020 and found that average annual giving to United Way Worldwide (No. 1) dropped 23 percent.

## Finding the right mix of small-dollar donors and major supporters is a struggle.

The organization historically relied on workplace campaigns that gave it access to company workers but not the ability to steward and connect with those employees outside the corporation — and those donors have fallen off in recent years, says Byron Garrett, chief revenue officer.

"We were over-indexed on the corporate side of how we were structured, and we had a lesser focus on individual giving," Garrett says. "So we've restructured internally to be better positioned."

That restructuring includes a focus on major gifts and a "laser-focused" annual gifts program to reach more individual donors outside their workplaces.

Meanwhile, the Wounded Warrior Project (No. 32) is looking for ways to broaden its support as its donor pool ages.

"We've known for years that the methods we used to bring in support for Wounded Warrior in

*Continued on Page 21*



|                                                                                             |                                                                                                                     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <div>80</div> <div>FRIENDS OF THE ISRAEL<br/>DEFENSE FORCES</div> <div>\$147,763,085</div>  | <div>91</div> <div>AMERICAN FRIENDS OF<br/>MAGEN DAVID ADOM</div> <div>\$133,534,171</div>                          |
| <div>81</div> <div>HEIFER PROJECT INTERNATIONAL</div> <div>\$147,758,616</div>              | <div>92</div> <div>AMERICAN COMMITTEE FOR THE<br/>WEIZMANN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE</div> <div>\$133,146,700</div>      |
| <div>82</div> <div>DUCKS UNLIMITED</div> <div>\$147,313,895</div>                           | <div>93</div> <div>GIVEDIRECTLY</div> <div>\$133,097,691</div>                                                      |
| <div>83</div> <div>NATIONAL MULTIPLE<br/>SCLEROSIS SOCIETY</div> <div>\$146,556,688</div>   | <div>94</div> <div>UNITED SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS</div> <div>\$127,839,062</div>                                      |
| <div>84</div> <div>ASPEN INSTITUTE</div> <div>\$146,232,190</div>                           | <div>95</div> <div>WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY</div> <div>\$126,893,853</div>                                     |
| <div>85</div> <div>ISLAMIC RELIEF USA</div> <div>\$143,348,508</div>                        | <div>96</div> <div>GREATER WASHINGTON EDUCATIONAL<br/>TELECOMMUNICATIONS ASSOCIATION</div> <div>\$122,112,317</div> |
| <div>86</div> <div>LOCAL INITIATIVES SUPPORT<br/>CORPORATION</div> <div>\$141,146,756</div> | <div>97</div> <div>MERCY CORPS</div> <div>\$121,018,913</div>                                                       |
| <div>87</div> <div>POPULATION SERVICES<br/>INTERNATIONAL</div> <div>\$139,799,607</div>     | <div>98</div> <div>LINCOLN CENTER FOR THE<br/>PERFORMING ARTS</div> <div>\$120,862,961</div>                        |
| <div>88</div> <div>UNBOUND</div> <div>\$138,198,942</div>                                   | <div>99</div> <div>FOOD FOR THE POOR</div> <div>\$120,651,518</div>                                                 |
| <div>89</div> <div>BEST FRIENDS ANIMAL SOCIETY</div> <div>\$136,837,725</div>               | <div>100</div> <div>EARTHJUSTICE</div> <div>\$117,781,830</div>                                                     |
| <div>90</div> <div>SCRIPPS RESEARCH INSTITUTE</div> <div>\$135,637,054</div>                |                                                                                                                     |

# How the Chronicle Ranks America’s Favorite Charities

America’s Favorite Charities is the *Chronicle’s* exclusive ranking of the U.S. nonprofits that raise the most in private support — gifts of cash and stock, specifically. It excludes government grants and, when possible, donated products. The goal: to identify cause-driven organizations that most successfully earn direct financial support from individuals, foundations, and corporations.

The ranking is based on average annual support raised by organizations from 2021 to 2023, the last year when full figures are available. Data used in the ranking was compiled from Internal Revenue Service Form 990 filings, audited financial statements, and surveys sent to tax-exempt organizations.

## What Is Not Included

The *Chronicle* reported only on nonprofits that solicit donations from the public. Private foundations were excluded, as were organizations based abroad, and any overseas affiliates of domestic groups. We did not include nonprofits controlled by government agencies.

The ranking excludes medical centers, colleges, and universities whose cash support makes up less than 50 percent of revenue. Unlike other charities, these organizations provide paid services to constituencies — patients, students, and their families — who also represent a significant share of their donors.

In calculating cash support, when we could determine which gifts to an organization went to its donor-advised funds, we excluded them. The ranking aims to measure the American public’s support of specific causes and organizations, and donor-advised accounts are charitable-giving vehicles, not organizations with a social mission.

Nonprofits such as community foundations and commercial donor-advised funds, which bring in enormous sums through contributions to their donor-advised accounts, typically do not raise enough money outside of those accounts to appear in this ranking.

## Data Collection

The *Chronicle* partnered with Cause IQ, a web-based provider of nonprofit information, to collect most of the data from the 990 tax forms that charities must file with the Internal Revenue Service. For some national organizations with affiliates, Cause IQ gathered data for all member organizations. Other national groups provided the information to the *Chronicle*.

Some national organizations that likely would appear on the ranking were unable to provide the data. These include Catholic Charities and the National Council of the U.S. Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

—DREW LINDSAY



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**Tech plays a critical role in helping nonprofits on the list get the right message to the right donors.**

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the past are not necessarily going to work as well going forward," says Chris Needles, chief development officer. The group has relied heavily on direct mail, and with increased costs and fewer younger donors responding, fundraisers have had to rethink their approach.

"We've had to reposition our fundraising strategies toward more major gifts, planned giving, a midlevel giving strategy," Needles says.

Blood Cancer United (No. 25) learned that its previous name — the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society — made it harder for the organization to connect with potential donors and rebranded in August.

"It felt like if you did not have leukemia and lymphoma — which are two of the larger types of blood cancer — that you didn't feel like this was the place for you," says Coker Powell, chief revenue officer.

The group's research showed some people weren't aware that leukemia and lymphoma were types of cancers and that people with blood cancers like myeloma didn't see the organization as speaking to them. With the name change, the group hopes to reach more donors and more clearly articulate what it does.

"The ultimate goal is bringing more people into the organization who would consider being a donor," Powell says. "That's really the end game."

### An Analytics Boost

Technology plays a critical role in helping America's Favorite Charities get the right message to the right donors.

Islamic Relief USA (No. 85), a religious nonprofit that provides humanitarian aid, has used data to guide support to underfunded programs.

Many donors want to help with disasters overseas in countries with large Muslim populations, says CEO Ahmed Shehata. But when the group

analyzed its donor information, it found supporters in one state were more keen to support U.S. efforts.

"By utilizing the data, it helped us to have a different message for the community in California," Shehata says. The approach netted almost \$20 million for programs the organization previously had to pay for out of its general fund.

World Central Kitchen (No. 41), the disaster-relief organization founded by celebrity chef José Andrés in 2010, is one of the newest nonprofits on our list. The group uses social media to provide constant updates to young donors, who love the immediacy of seeing what's happening, says Tunde Wackman, chief development officer.

"They feel like their dollars are actually making a difference in the field," she says. During disasters, she says, donors share information with friends and others, which leads to "rapid scaling" on digital channels.

Many donors first give to the Michael J. Fox Foundation through peer events.

"We tend to not go back to them aggressively," Boudreau, the group's chief development officer, says. "But we do steward them. We might every year send them something about our foundation, a reminder of who we are."

The group keeps a robust database to make sure it knows whom to contact and how often it has done so. Boudreau was reminded recently of the power of patient stewardship.

A donor gave \$1,000 to a peer campaign in 2014, and the organization stayed in touch. "We hadn't received a gift from that individual until two weeks ago, when that person's family foundation sent us \$1 million," Boudreau said in August. "Obviously, that doesn't happen all the time. But if not for our database of donors, we would not have probably stayed in touch with that person." ■

*Drew Lindsay and Nandita Raghuram contributed to this article.*