



Generosity Dinners are opportunities for interested individuals to gather in a comfortable and personable “home” environment, share a meal, and participate in a giving experiment. Generosity Dinners introduce individuals to the Common Change model, demonstrating in a hands-on way how giving groups work, and exploring the underlying principles of collaborative giving.

Prep your Guests

We advise that you send guests an email one week before your dinner, inviting them to start thinking about needs to present:

One of the most amazing aspects of collaborative giving is that it changes the way we react to other peoples’ needs. Instead of ignoring or shying away from needs for lack of resources, we get to proactively look for and respond to the needs around us, because we know that we have resources to meet them. This week leading up to the meal, start looking around you for needs you might bring to the table. Think about your co-workers, community members, family, friends or neighbors. To get the juices flowing, here is a small sampling of some needs Common Change groups have met recently.

- *Tattoo removal for a young person trying to turn their life around and get a steady job*
- *Juicer for a friend struggling with cancer and on a restricted diet*
- *Helping a neighbor with car repairs and mortgage as she changed jobs and tried to support her daughter*
- *Childcare for family while Dad, the primary caregiver, was ill*
- *Bus trip for friend to travel home to see dying mother*
- *Payment for medicine to cure infection contracted by a friend while working with people in Afghanistan*
- *Walker for homeless friend*
- *Assistance with co-pays for family having a baby*

We encourage you to browse through the Common Change blog for other ideas. In particular check out our April 2014 recap for some exciting need ideas: <http://www.commonchange.com/blog/2014/05/01/celebrating-april/>

Discussion

Aim: Discover creative ways you could use the money in your group dinner pot to meet the needs of people the group knows. Agree to share all the money.

Use the discussion points below to lead conversation and introduce guests to the idea of collaborative giving. We recommend that after the meal, or around smaller tables during the meal, divide your guests into groups of 3-4. Have each guest share a request for someone they know. After 10-15 of sharing and discussion, have all guests rejoin and ask for guests to retell a request that they heard shared in their small group.

Guided by the questions below, work through each request. While you may not be able to put funds toward each request, try to honor the requestor and need by exploring alternative ways the need could be met. Come up with at least one actionable suggestion, resource, connection or idea which can help the requestor walk alongside their friend well even if the group doesn’t help financially.

Questions

How do you know this person? Requests must be on behalf of an individual or family and be for someone you are directly in relationship with. Guests cannot nominate themselves.

What is the need? Get as specific as you can. It is easier to identify with and respond to specific needs.
A neighbor’s car is having trouble:



*Do they need a tune-up, brakes replaced, new tires, a new car, a temporary hire while it's in for repairs?
Drill down on how best the funds could help out.*

Break big needs down into more manageable requests.

A friend is undergoing chemotherapy and facing massive medical bills. In all reality, your group dinner fund is not going to make a dent in the costs.

Are their specific dietary requirements you could help out with?

Could you pay for prescription medication?

Does the recipient need childcare while in treatment?

What other resources besides money does the group collectively have available? Think about the collective resources, physical goods, knowledge, expertise, and personal and professional networks you can tap into. Also, what other support structure does the person in need have?

A family lost everything they own in a fire.

What spare household goods do members of the group have sitting idle?

Could a group member invest a couple of hours and help by scouring Craigslist and Freecycle to replace items on a list?

How can this request be met in other creative ways?

A colleague was involved in a car accident.

Could we pay for repairs, lend our second car, get rid of the car sitting in the garage that we only use once a month, explore car-share options, connect the person to our mechanic friend who is trust-worthy and will give a good price etc?

Decision-making

The actual decision-making process can be the hardest part of hosting a generosity dinner. We have found that after well-structured and engaging group discussion there is often a clear and natural group consensus as to how best the funds can be met. Here are a couple of ways to structure decision-making:

1. After group discussion, go around the circle and have guests nominate which need/s should be met
2. Follow the group discussion, reflect back what you have heard and take the lead on suggesting how you hear the group leaning.
3. Take a vote – this could be anonymous by having guests write the request on a piece of paper or public through a simple show of hands
4. Take a vote online – set up a simple Survey Monkey with the discussed requests, amounts, and actionable steps and send this to guests immediately following the dinner. Keep the survey open for 24 hours max and have guests weigh-in virtually on where they think the funds should go. Common Change is happy to administer this survey on your behalf.