

The Best and Worst of Nonprofit Newsletters

*And how to write emails that stand out from
the rest!*



Patty Breech, Founder and CEO
THE PURPOSE COLLECTIVE

I'm glad you're here!

Add your answer to the chat: who
has sent out a nonprofit
newsletter in the last 6 weeks?

Drop your “subscribe” link in the chat!

Hi, I'm Patty!





A few quick notes:

YES you will get a copy of the slides.

YES I'm happy to meet with you
one-on-one to go over *your* newsletters.

www.the-purpose-collective.com/free-office-hours

Let's get started...

Why does your nonprofit send an email newsletter?

**“Email lists and websites are the only
two things you can own on the
internet. **The rest is just rented.”****

- Pat Flynn

<https://www.smartpassiveincome.com/learn/email-marketing/>

An important note:

We'll be reviewing real nonprofit newsletters, because **concrete examples** make conversations like these really stick.

The “what not to do” examples are presented here gently, **with kindness**.

Creating an email newsletter is difficult, and we’re not trying to shame anyone. This advice is **meant to be helpful, not hurtful**.

Every nonprofit organization is changing
the world in wonderful ways.

We want to make sure your email
newsletters are **doing your work justice.**

Tip #1: The worst emails...

Use too many big words.

They're very dry and professional.

They're full of industry jargon.

They use acronyms.

The impact of COVID-19 on rural [country name]'s education

Throughout the pandemic, COVID-19 has dramatically affected education around the world. Many schools had to adopt remote learning technologies to continue educating students through extended lockdowns. While this has been challenging for all schools, the situation has been really difficult for remote regions in [country name] that have less access to resources.

[Organization name] has been working with local governments and schools to best meet the educational needs of students in [Organization name] partner communities, which are extremely remote. The government has categorized students into five groups based on their access to resources, ranging from having a computer with the internet to having no access to any technology, including radios or televisions. Most students in [Organization name]'s working area fall under the latter group and do not have access to any type of technology.

Government support for this education group has so far consisted of distributing self-learning materials, textbooks, and audio-visual technology. These techniques can be effective but require a high level of teacher and volunteer engagement to support students and parents with their remote learning.



The impact of COVID-19 on rural [country name]'s education

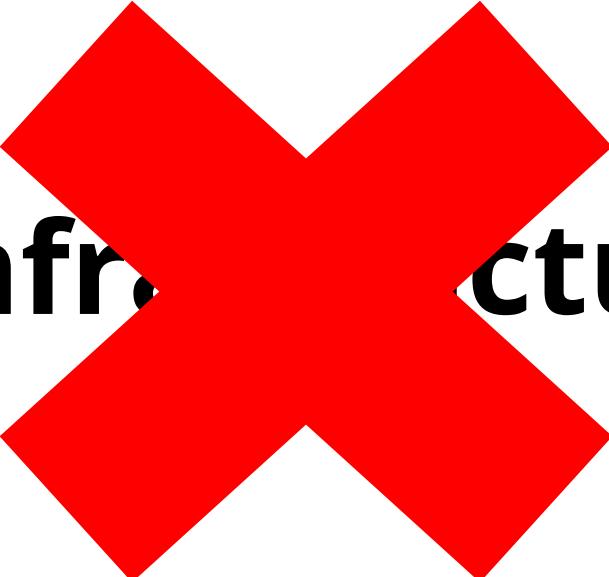
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Donor-Centricity and Readability Tool

<https://bloomerang.co/comms-audit-tool/>



Infrast...ture

Tip #1: The best emails...

Use simple language.

Avoid industry jargon.

Aim for a 6th grade reading level.

Use a conversational tone.

'Tis the season to feed your neighbors

Rachael was forced to shut her business down when COVID-19 hit.

Thanks to your support, she took up farming.

Five months later, neighbors are lining up for her vegetables.

"I actually turn away traders from the market because I know my neighbors are waiting," says Rachael.

As hunger rates continue to rise in Kenya, your generosity could not come at a better time.

Thanks for all that you do to uplift others. We're grateful to have you on our team.



YOUR GENEROSITY AT WORK

Read how Rachael
is feeding neighbors
in Kenya.

[Launch Story + Photos](#)

'Tis the season to feed your neighbors

"Rachael was forced to shut her business down when COVID-19 hit.

Thanks to your support, **she took up farming.**

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Thanks for all that you do to uplift others. We're grateful to have you on our team.

Tip #2: The worst emails...

Don't tell a story.

They use too many statistics.

They assume you already know why your support is needed.



End 2020 on a Grateful Note

As the year comes to a close, we want to take a moment to thank you for your generosity this year.

Let's head into a new year as a stronger community than ever. [Donate to \[Organization name\]'s operating fund today.](#)

[Donate today.](#)

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“Let’s head into a new year as a stronger community than ever. **Donate to [Organization name]’s operating fund today.**”

[Donate today.](#)

Remember: you are not the only organization sending emails to this donor.

Don't assume they remember everything about you.

Tip #2: The best emails...

Tell a great story.

Focus on one individual.

Draw the reader in with a compelling tale.



MEET PATCHES

Dear friend,

For many of our donkeys, they've had it pretty rough by the time they arrive at our facility; Patches was no different. A few months before we got him, Patches was dumped at a kill pen, where he was neglected and mistreated. He was rescued by our partners at All Seated In a Barn and endured a 40-hour transport to Oscar's Place. **When he arrived, he was literally dying of starvation and malnourishment.** His body was destroying his organs for energy to stay alive. As a result, he had lost his vision and his skin was coming off.

We immediately rushed Patches to the UC Davis Veterinary Hospital for treatment. At first, no one thought he would make it. But with the team's expert care, they were able to convert his energy source back to carbs and begin his healing process. Our own team created a detailed, intentional plan to continue Patches' physical and emotional recovery at Oscar's Place, and he is progressing at a wonderful pace. **I'm amazed by how resilient Patches has been.**



Today, Patches is gaining weight and his hair has started to return. We believe he can see shadows, and he definitely knows the sound of our voices. He loves neck rubs and tasty treats. Little by little, we are integrating him into the herd. We want Patches to experience life outside of a medical treatment stall and to hopefully find a companion that will help guide him. **Because of you, Patches will enjoy a lifetime of all the love and care he deserves.** Thank you for saving Patches's life, friend. You are making his remarkable transformation possible.

With gratitude,

Ron King, Co-Founder & CEO
Oscar's Place Adoption Center & Sanctuary
www.oscarsplace.org

P.S. On one of my recent Sunday morning video tours of Oscar's Place, Patches made an appearance! **Check it out to see how he's doing.**

Dear friend,

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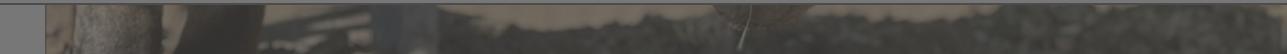
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Because of you, Patches will enjoy a lifetime of all the love and care he deserves. **Thank you for saving Patches's life, friend.**"

Ron King, Co-Founder & CEO
Oscar's Place Adoption Center & Sanctuary

This email about Patches has a **68.8% open rate.**

(The industry average for nonprofits is 20-30%.)

People love stories!

Tip #3: The worst emails...

Use WE-focused language.

Understandably, organizations want to highlight their successes – but this comes across very self-centered.

It can also make it seem like support is not needed.

[Organization name]'s mission is to educate, entertain and inspire a diverse audience through music and conversation, to create a socially responsible and environmentally sustainable world.

Hi Patty,

Thank you for joining us over the years at [Organization name]!

All of us at [Organization name] are thrilled to share with you what makes this organization so special to our community -- and beyond.

[Organization name] is a community treasure that manifests [our town]'s values and spirit. As a nonprofit, [Organization name] is a fan-supported resource that helps make our community what it is today through both its programming and many community events.

For 28 years, [Organization name] has enhanced [our town]'s music scene through live radio program tapings and other live music events.

[Organization name] consistently brings in an amazing variety of musicians from around the world, from the legendary **Mavis Staples** to the unforgettable show with **Rising Appalachia and Ramy Essam**.

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This organization is a fan-supported resource that helps make our community what it is today through both its programming and many events.”

Beware of tooting your own horn.

Tip #3: The best emails...

Use YOU-focused language.

Invite the reader into your story.

Show them there is a clear role for them here.



Happy New Year from Ignite!

Dear Igniter,

Happy New Year! I hope you had a wonderful holiday season filled with warmth, laughter, and memorable moments (and if you were lucky, some time on the slopes).

As we head into 2023 and our 48th season, I want to say THANK YOU — from the bottom of my heart — for being a part of our Ignite family. **This holiday season, we really felt the love from you.** We appreciate your donations, support, and words of encouragement. All of it makes a life-changing difference for our athletes.

Your support fuels us as we head into the season ahead. **It's officially underway**, and I can already feel that it will be an amazing one. We have an INCREDIBLE group of talented volunteers, passionate athletes, and dedicated families. **I can't wait to see the magic that unfolds on the mountain this winter!**

I'm so grateful for this strong, supportive, and FUN community that we've built together. **Thank you for being a part of it, Igniter.** Wishing you and your family a healthy, joyful, and inspiring 2023.

See you on the slopes!

“As we head into 2023 and our 48th season, I want to say **THANK YOU** — from the bottom of my heart — for being a part of our Ignite family.

This holiday season, we really felt the love from **you**. We appreciate **your** donations, support, and words of encouragement. All of it makes a life-changing difference for our athletes.

Your support fuels us as we head into the season ahead.”

Tip #4: The worst emails...

Don't stand out from the rest.

They have generic subject lines.

There's no personalization.

They're too text-heavy.

Dear friends,

2022 has been a year of unimaginable challenges for thousands of our friends and neighbors, unprecedented generosity from tens of thousands more, as well as ongoing collaboration with our government and community partners. We enter August of this challenging year, our 31st year as [this community]'s philanthropic partner, humbled by the determination of our community and dedicated collaboration of partners old and new. [This community] is facing a long road ahead to heal and rebuild from the [natural disaster], but we will continue to walk this road together with determination and collaboration.

Although the pace of recovery continues to be a challenge, it is through this determined collaboration that [as of June 25th the county has announced that a recovery team has been meeting with survivors to provide services and financial support](#), including distributing the unmet needs and rebuilding dollars available from the Emergency Fund. [Our community] is partnering with Lutheran Family Services to administrate this free service for individuals affected by the [recent natural disaster]. A navigator will be assigned to work one-on-one with everyone who signs up for the program in order to access not only all available Emergency Fund dollars, but a broad array of support, including available financial support and other supports for unmet needs, referrals to legal and insurance providers, comprehensive recovery planning resources, financial resources for rebuilding from the Emergency Fund and other government agencies, as well as mental health services. It's important that every affected household sign up in order to best assess your needs, whether you are rebuilding or not. Residents can set up an appointment by calling [\[phone number\]](#) or emailing [\[email address\]](#).

The program "is a new service with new processes, and we appreciate your patience," said [government official]. "We expect a large volume of calls during the first few weeks. Please be assured that a team member will be in contact with you as soon as possible."

Dear friends,

2022 has been a year of unimaginable challenges for thousands of our friends and neighbors, unprecedented generosity from tens of thousands more, as well as ongoing collaboration with our government and community partners. We enter August of this challenging year, our 31st year as [this community]'s philanthropic

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Tip #4: The best emails...

Are inviting and easy to consume.

They use personalization.

They're easily skimmable.

Compelling imagery makes them come alive.
Or, they use plain text for a personal touch.

Give the Gift of Dance
this Colorado Gives Day

Meet Leilani Montoya



Hi ColoradoGives, A Program of Community First Foundation!

I was going to school at Monaco Elementary in Commerce City at seven years old when faculty from Colorado Conservatory of Dance (CCD) visited to teach my class about bugs and insects ***through dance***.

We learned about praying mantises. CCD instructors taught us the movement of a hunting praying mantis, then showed us, with dance, how to make the motions ourselves.

I felt like I had been transported to a whole new universe, one that I had never known existed.

That community dance class ended with a big performance for our parents. Before, I had no idea how amazing the dance world could be. I didn't know anyone from it, so I didn't know that a career in dance was an option for me.

CCD showed me the possibilities.

After the program ended, CCD invited me to take a trial class at their studios. I was lucky that my parents had reliable transportation to take me there. I was offered a scholarship to learn dance at CCD, a scholarship that was only accessible to me through gracious support from donors like you.

I took the opportunity, and I began my dance journey.

I trained at CCD for the next 12 years, where I had the opportunity to learn dance under professional faculty members, and for the first time had the opportunity to audition for main stage productions, like *The Nutcracker*. I performed in many *Nutcrackers* and other performances. I was a member of [Studio Company](#) for several years, training with many choreographers and visiting artists.

I am now an active dancer and performer, and I also teach dance at CCD.

If CCD hadn't visited my school, I don't know if I would have thought about pursuing dance in any serious way, but because of that one opportunity, I discovered my passion, and I joined a community that I love. I am forever grateful for that one thing that probably changed the course of my life: Dance.

I hope you'll consider giving to CCD, so that more people like me can discover the world of dance.

Sincerely,

Leilani Montoya

Dancer & CCD Faculty Member

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I hope you'll consider giving to CCD, so that more people like me can discover the world of dance."

Dancer & CCD Faculty Member

A note on subject lines...

This is a super important part of getting people to read your newsletter.

Avoid the word “newsletter” in the subject line.

Instead of: Happy Mother's Day!

- This could be an email subject line from any organization. It doesn't stand out from the rest and doesn't tell you anything about the organization or email content.

Consider: Celebrating moms (on 4 legs and 2)!

- Enthusiastic tone, piques curiosity, I know this will be about animals

Instead of: Happy Valentine's Day!

- Same thing here: super generic, doesn't distinguish your organization from others.

Consider: Stories of love, made possible by you ❤️

- Feels more personal and emotional; lets me know that there will be a story that will make me feel good

Instead of: Sweetie and Burpee's story

- Doesn't give any important information or make me curious; I don't know these names

Consider: Everything we could do still wasn't enough.

- Vulnerable subject line; makes the reader curious to find out what happened

Tip #5: The worst emails...

Try to convey too much information.

The content is overwhelming.

The reader may not absorb any of it.

VOTER and election information

CONNECT
ENGAGE
VOTE

Presidential Primary Information

Final Reminders

- It is too late to mail your ballot. Please drop it off. Find a [24-Hour Drop Box or Voter Service Center](#) to return your ballot. All 24-hour ballot drop boxes are under camera surveillance. Ballots are due by 7 p.m. on **Election Day, Tuesday, March 3, 2020.**
- If you need a replacement ballot or want to vote in-person, visit a [Voter Service Center. Bring ID.](#)
- It is never too late to register to vote. If you know someone who still needs to register and vote, please have them visit a [Voter Service Center](#) with ID on or before 7 p.m. on Election Day, Tuesday, March 3, 2020.



Election Videos

We have two excellent 60-second election ads that tell you everything you need to know about the Presidential Primary.

Check our [original version](#) and our ["outtakes"](#) version too!

Watch them both, subscribe to our channel, and share them with friends! Don't forget to tag us on social media!

Instagram: [REDACTED]
Twitter: [REDACTED]
Facebook: [REDACTED]

Know a 17-year-old?

17-year-olds who will turn 18-years-old by the General Election (November 3, 2020) can now VOTE in Primaries.

Have them visit a [Voter Service Center](#) to get registered and vote today! Check out [valid forms of ID](#) to bring before coming or call if you have questions:

Important Dates:

Now

- [Voter Service and Polling Centers](#) open.

Feb 28

- [Drive-by Ballot Drop-off locations](#) open.
- Ballot Processing Center Tours / Elections Open House 12:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. ([RSVP](#))

March 2

- Ballot Processing Center Tours / Elections Open House 4:30 p.m. - 6 p.m. ([RSVP](#))

March 3 Presidential Primary Election Day

- Ballot drop-off and voting services available 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Ballots must be received by 7 p.m. to be counted.
- Remember, it is never too late to register & vote. Tell a friend to visit a [Voter Service Center](#) to register & vote. Bring ID.

Presidential Primary Information

Final Results

- It is too late to mail your ballot. [Hour Drop Box or Voter Service Center](#)

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• **It is too late to mail your ballot. Please drop it off.**

[Voter Service Center with ID on or before
Day, Tuesday, March 3, 2020.](#)



- Unaffiliated voters, if you receive instructions, you will receive a ballot but *can only vote one*. If two voted ballots are sent to us, none of the votes will be counted. Please tell us if you received the second unvoted ballot.

- [Drive-by Ballot Drop-off locations](#) open.
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- Unaffiliated voters: As noted in the voter instructions, you were mailed both party ballots ***but can only vote and return one.*** If two voted ballots are returned to us, none of the votes/ballots can be counted. Please tear and discard/recycle the second unvoted ballot.

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Tip #5: The best emails...

Avoid information overload.

Aim for 2 to 4 pieces of information, not 24.

Tell one story.

**AT GROWING HOME, WE BELIEVE THAT NO FAMILY
SHOULD FACE HOMELESS OR HOUSING INSECURITY**

Many of us will never truly understand the uncertainty of not knowing if we'll be able to cover our rent. However, for too many families in our community, this uncertainty is a daily challenge.

Colorado Gives Day is the perfect time to make an impact.

You Can Make a Difference Today!

With Growing Home's Housing Stability Program, we provide supplemental housing assistance so families can overcome obstacles and build lifelong stability, resiliency, and well-being.



Your Donation Transforms Lives!

Your generous contribution today vitalizes families in need.

DONATE NOW!

Thank you for your continued support, and let's keep making a difference, one family at a time.

With Growing Home's Housing Stability Program, we provide supplemental housing assistance so families can overcome obstacles and build lifelong stability, resiliency, and well-being.



94%
**OF FAMILIES WERE STABLY HOUSED WHEN
THEY EXITED GROWING HOME'S HOUSING
STABILITY PROGRAM IN 2022.**

Your Donation Transforms Lives!

With Growing Home's Housing Stability Program, we provide supplemental housing assistance so families can overcome obstacles and build lifelong stability, resiliency, and well-being.

"94% of families were stably housed when they exited Growing Home's housing stability program in 2022."

Your Donation Transforms Lives!

IN SUMMARY

1

Use simple language.

2

Tell a story.

3

Use YOU-focused language.

4

Be inviting and easy to consume.

5

Avoid information overload.

Let's practice!

Can you change the wording in this paragraph to bring it down from a 15th grade reading level to a 6th grade one?

Donor-Centricity and Readability Tool

<https://bloomerang.co/comms-audit-tool/>

Donor-Centricity and Readability Tool

Original text:

“Government support for this education group has so far consisted of distributing self-learning materials, textbooks, and audio-visual technology. These techniques can be effective but require a high level of teacher and volunteer engagement to support students and parents with their remote learning.”

Updated text:

Let's practice!

Would you categorize the following emails
in the “best” category, or “needs
improvement”?

Why?

Our email scorecard:

1. Uses simple language.
2. Tells a great story.
3. Uses YOU-focused language.
4. Is inviting and easy to consume.
5. Avoids information overload.

[Organization name's] Winter 2022 Newsletter



An Exciting New Chapter for BCC!

In 2018, BCC adopted a strategic plan that set goals to diversify our revenue and expand services to children from birth to 5 years old. Over the last three years, we have been actively pursuing partnerships to achieve these goals and are proud to announce that BCC is now partnering with XX County Office of Education (XXCOE) to provide high-quality, inclusive infant, toddler and preschool programs through the Head Start/Early Head Start Program model.

As a XXCOE delegate, BCC will be positioned to increase our enrollment to nearly 100 students per year, and to serve as a model for inclusion in early learning environments. XXCOE, which is funded by the Administration for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services, and the state Department of Education, partners with 13 other delegates including nonprofit agencies and school districts to serve more than 10,000 children ages 0-5 in our county.

For 84 years, [Organization name] has evolved to meet the needs of the youngest children in our county facing these issues. We are excited to enter this new chapter in our history as we strive to serve more families than ever before and expand our reach throughout this city.

An Exciting New Chapter for BCC!

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1. Uses simple language.

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2. Tells a great story.

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3. Uses YOU-focused language.

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As a XXCOE delegate, BCC will be positioned to increase our enrollment to nearly 100 students per year, and to serve as a model for inclusion in early learning environments. XXCOE, which is funded by the Administration for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services, and the state Department of Education, partners with 13 other delegates including nonprofit agencies and school districts to serve more than 10,000 children ages 0-5 in our county.

For 84 years, [Organization name] has evolved to meet the needs of the youngest children in our county facing these issues. We are excited to enter this new chapter in our history as we strive to serve more families than ever before and expand our reach throughout this city.



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5. Avoids information overload.

Our email scorecard:



1. Uses simple language.



2. Tells a great story.



3. Uses YOU-focused language.



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"I want you to know that you have changed my life and my children's lives."

- Millicent K.

Millicent is a tailor by trade.

Her income increased from \$7 to \$12 per week when she started selling clean stoves in her shop in [name of town]. She earns \$1 commission from each sale.

[Now,] "I am able to make healthy meals for my husband and children. My neighbors and customers who use the stoves say they don't cough as much as they used to when they were using open fires. I want you to know that you have changed my life and my children's lives."

We're so grateful for you,

Your generosity is lightening loads, increasing incomes, and feeding so many people every day. We are so grateful you are part of our community. Thank you for sharing our values and giving with dignity.

Wishing you a wonderful Thanksgiving.

Warmly,
[Organization Name]



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HOLIDAY NEWSLETTER



Dear Friend,

As the snow begins to fall, so does the year-end giving season; a time when many think about how they can give back. There are many ways to support [Organization name] this holiday season. We appreciate your help in reaching our year-end goals.

We are grateful for our [students], [students' parents], [other program participants], Staff, and Community of Supporters! Together, we are Believers Today, Leaders Tomorrow, and a Community for Life.

We invite you to follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) to stay informed on the latest news from the organization.

Graciously,

[Name], Executive Director

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3 Newsletter Tips for ColoradoGives.org

1. Make Your Donation URL Point to Your External Website w/ CG.org Embeddable Form or Donation Widget
2. Use CG.org Year Round to familiarize your audience with their opportunities to support you outside of CGD
3. Integrate Your CG.org Data w/ Your CRM & Marketing System for seamless data management.

ColoradoGives.org On YOUR Website

Free Donation Widget

Find it on your Org page in
“Fundraising Tools” under
“Widgets”

Donation Widget saw an average
amount of **\$578 donated** per
month across NPOs

Example:
<https://www.broomfieldfish.org/donate/>

Broomfield FISH

\$25 \$50
 \$100 \$500
 Other

Recurring monthly donation

DONATE

Powered by  mightycause

MONETARY DONATIONS

Your gift to Broomfield FISH delivers a healthy return. For every dollar you donate, 93 cents goes directly to our neighbors in need. There are many ways you can contribute. Our Tax ID/EIN is 84-1591870.

- To make an online donation, simply use this form or click the DONATE NOW button above. To write a check, please send your donation to the address listed below.

Broomfield FISH
6 Garden Center, Broomfield, CO 80020

- Consider asking your employer if they have a matching gift or employee giving program. This lets you double or even triple your contribution!
- You can also make a donation in honor or memory of a loved one.

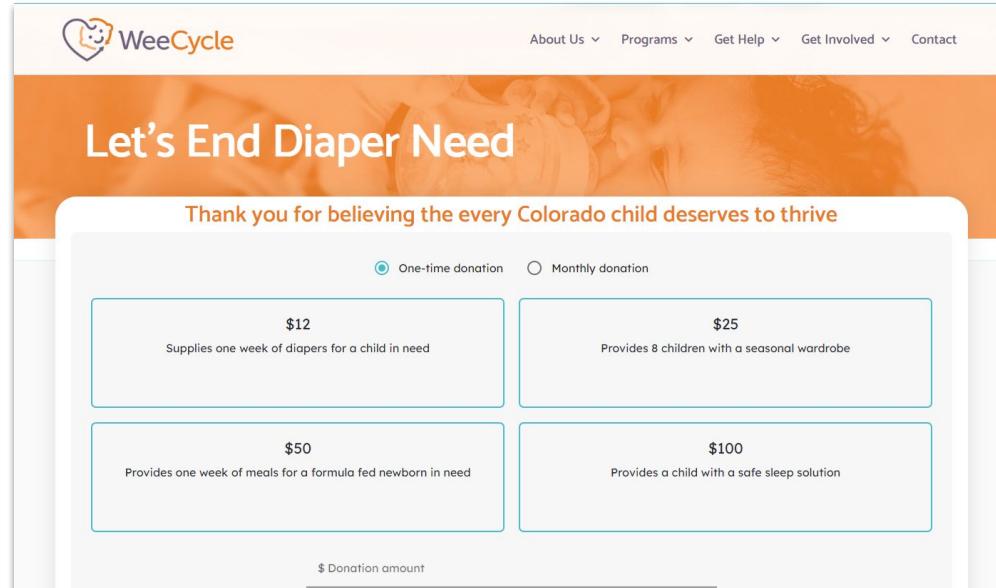
ColoradoGives.org On YOUR Website

Embeddable Donation Form (\$19/m)

Find it on your Org page in “Settings” under “Plan Management”

Embeddable Donation Form saw a whopping **\$2,279 average** amount donated per month across NPOs

Example:
<https://weecycle.org/get-involved/donate/>



ColoradoGives.org Data Integrations

Advanced Features Package w/ Integrations (\$69/m)

Find it on your Org page in “Settings”
under “Plan Management”

Free Trial Available
Subscription Model - No Contracts
1:1 Demo Available

Learn More:
<https://www.coloradogives.org/p/pricing>

Integrations

Connect your Mightycause data to the other applications that keep your organization running.

Salesforce
Connect Mightycause to your Salesforce account to sync donor and donation data.
[Advanced](#)

Zapier
Utilize Zapier to complement your Mightycause experience with third-party tools.
[Advanced](#)

Mailchimp
Integrate your Mightycause organization with Mailchimp to automatically sync your contacts, and more.
[Advanced](#)

Slack
Integrate your Mightycause organization with Slack to automatically send messages for donation alerts and more.
[Advanced](#)

Google Analytics and Facebook Pixel
Link your Google Analytics account and Facebook Pixel for page views and event tracking.
[Advanced](#)

HubSpot
Link your HubSpot account to sync donor and donation data automatically.
[Advanced](#)



What CG.org Resources are Available to NPOs?

Colorado Gives Day 2023 Toolkit

Library of
Digital Fundraising Webinars

1:1 Meeting on Leveraging
ColoradoGives.org



LET'S CONNECT!

Patty Breech

patty@the-purpose-collective.com

www.linkedin.com/in/pattybreech

NOW OFFERING FREE OFFICE HOURS!

www.the-purpose-collective.com