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# 'TIS BETTER TO GIVE

Philanthropic leader **Zoe Katz Samuels** shares where to make holiday donations—and why

BY ESTHER D. KUSTANOWITZ

**F**or Zoe Katz Samuels, philanthropy is about feeling connected.

“Individuals give from their heart and often without needing anything in return,” says Samuels, who runs the Los Angeles office of the bicoastal, social-impact agency Weinstein Carnegie Philanthropic Group (WCPG). “It’s really important that brands have a purpose component in some way, that they’re connected to a charitable or social-impact goal.”

Among today’s Gen Z consumers, Samuels says, “there is an assumption that the brands that they’re buying and the celebrities they’re following on



social media or going to their concerts, are engaging philanthropically in some way—and if they’re not, they should be.”

While WCPG works on a variety of initiatives in entertainment, sports and beyond, small donations “really do make a difference,” Samuels says. “Give to organizations that are important to you. Not everyone is

going to give everything they can to one; it’s okay to spread what you’re going to give to a few organizations.”

We asked Samuels to share 10 organizations that could use some support, including some Los Angeles-based efforts, no matter the size of your end-of-year giving budget.



## Comfort Cases

Most children in foster care carry their few belongings from home to home in trash bags. Comfort Cases partners with local agencies across the country, including in L.A., to provide these kids with essential supplies and a special backpack to call their own. [comfortcases.org](http://comfortcases.org)

## V Foundation

The V Foundation, founded by the late basketball coach and broadcaster Jim Valvano, has raised more than \$310 million for cancer research. Samuels says the foundation’s direct-impact funding for pediatric cancer research to the tune of \$67 million has helped increase the five-year survival rate for children with cancer from 58% to 84.7%. That’s a truly worthy cause. [v.org](http://v.org)

## CORE

Disaster response organization Community Organized Relief Effort (CORE) mobilizes resources and works directly with affected communities. Samuels says she is particularly impressed with its response to the COVID-19 pandemic—including establishing Los Angeles testing sites—“and their ability to utilize learnings from this moment to mobilize during the disasters that followed.” [coreresponse.org](http://coreresponse.org)

## The Skatepark Project

The Skatepark Project—formerly the Tony Hawk Foundation—has awarded more than \$10 million to 600+ public skatepark projects in underserved communities nationwide, and \$150,000 to support Skateistan programs in



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: CARRELL RIVERO PHOTOGRAPHY; COURTESY COMFORT CASES; LIAM STORRINGS/CORE





to supporting niche but crucial areas of agriculture including coffee farmers and beekeepers,” continually inspires her. [heifer.org](http://heifer.org)

**Comic Relief US**

Since its inception, Comic Relief US has raised over \$380 million toward breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty, helping nearly 31 million children worldwide through Red Nose Day and other programs. Samuels called it “the pinnacle of bringing the Hollywood and corporate communities together to create a movement for change and impact.” [comirelief.org](http://comirelief.org)

**Earthjustice**

Because 2023 marked Southern California’s first tropical storm in 84 years, Samuels says supporting Earthjustice, a collective of the lawyers behind the world’s biggest climate fights (and headquartered in Los Angeles), will assist the firm’s commitment to “prioritizing their clients, including Mother Earth.” [earthjustice.org](http://earthjustice.org)

Afghanistan, Cambodia and South Africa. Based in Southern California, the project advocates for action sports to be safer, more inclusive and more accessible. [skatepark.org](http://skatepark.org)

**Elton John AIDS Foundation**

One of the leading independent AIDS organizations in the world, the Elton John AIDS Foundation funds front-line partners to prevent HIV infections,

tackle stigma and provide compassionate care for vulnerable communities worldwide. Samuels notes the organization’s “tireless commitment to the cause” and highlights the launch of the Rocket Fund, “a transformative \$125 million campaign to redouble the fight against AIDS everywhere.” [eltonjohnaidsfoundation.org](http://eltonjohnaidsfoundation.org)

**The Art of Elysium**

For nearly 25 years, The Art of Elysium has paired volunteer artists with L.A. communities to craft arts-based programs that serve 30,000 people every year who are experiencing crises like illness, hospitalization, displacement and confinement. Samuels says the organization is “utilizing the power of art to make a difference in the lives of people who need it most.” [theartofelysium.org](http://theartofelysium.org)

**Heifer International**

Since launching in 1944, Heifer International has provided over 35 million farmers with physical tools needed to grow their farms and has educated them on how to create sustainable businesses. Samuels says the organization’s “growing commitment to developing sustainable agricultural solutions and



**Daughters for Earth**

Daughters for Earth funds women globally to implement local climate solutions. “I love how the organization is tackling two critical issues: climate change and empowering women,” Samuels says. “Hearing the stories of how these women are making a difference inspires me to make even the smallest pro-environmental changes in my own community.” [daughtersforearth.org](http://daughtersforearth.org)



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