



# TrueGift Donations

## 2010 Annual Report For TrueGift Donations

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3/31/11

TrueGift Donations was founded with the mission of filling a critical need – the need for ordinary supplies such as pencils, glue and construction paper in our nation’s schools. Our research indicates that this need is only superficially addressed in the budgets of school districts nationwide. Nearly every teacher we surveyed spent substantial amounts, sometimes 5% of gross salary, simply to supply their classroom with the basic implements of their trade. Some teachers can’t, or won’t, bear this expense. Their students simply live without. TrueGift believes that our children can be better served.

TrueGift provides, as a service to the community, an internet-based registry of the supplies needed most urgently by each participating classroom. The teachers articulate these needs to form the registry, and the registry is updated as supplies are delivered. The TrueGift business model provides two ways for donors to contribute.

Primarily, TrueGift functions as a conventional charity. Cash donations are made to TrueGift as a 501 (c) (3) corporation\*. Individual contributions may sometimes be matched by corporate employers. These contributions are then used to purchase and deliver school supplies. The donor’s wishes, if expressed, are generally followed whenever possible. For example, the donor can select a state, district, school or classroom to which contributions are directed†.

This is working well. In 2010, cash donations totaled \$4275 from 11 individuals, 4 of whom donated through PG&E’s Campaign For The Community. This compares to \$1756 in 2009 and \$2910 in 2008. TrueGift continues to look for ways to purchase larger quantities of goods at lower prices, ship them most efficiently, and simplify the company recordkeeping. Figure 1 shows contributions by source in 2010. Figure 2 shows contribution and shipping levels over the last several years.

Funds obtained in 2010 were used to purchase, pack and ship supplies to 97 teachers in 30 schools, most of which were in the San Francisco Bay Area. TrueGift provided or facilitated donations of approximately \$3408 worth of school supplies in 2010. Essentially all of this year’s donations were shipped in the fall when supplies are cheaper and the needs are acute.

Part of our process involves packing parties at which volunteers pack the supplies for 50 teachers in a few hours. Its always fun and makes an impressive pile of boxes in our

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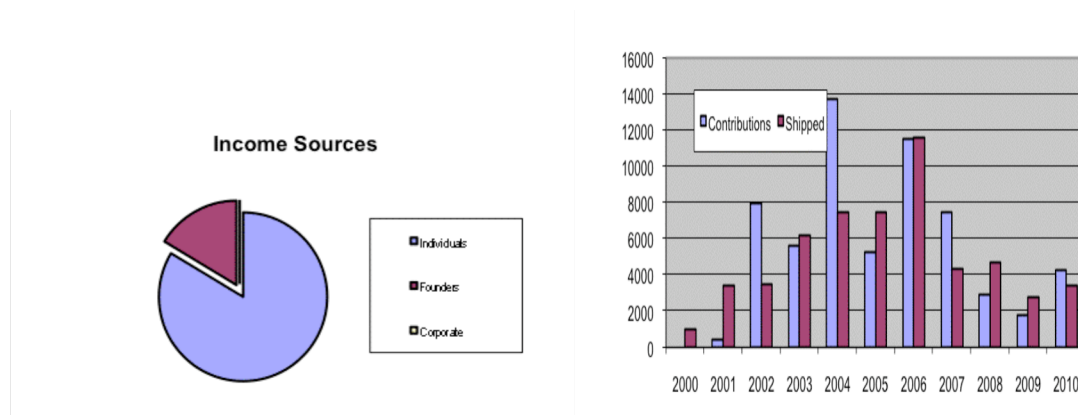
\* TrueGift received 501 (c)(3) authorization in 2005. The advance ruling letter was received in April of 2002, and applies retroactively to all donations made since August 8, 2000.

† Although TrueGift generally respects the wishes of donors, it retains the final decision about where to place the donations. For example, when a list is filled by several donors, TrueGift selects nearby classrooms and schools to receive the excess donations.



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front hallway. Several donors have developed an affinity for particular schools or school districts. Some come by to help with the packing.



**Figure 1. Individual Contributions were key. Figure 2. 2010 marks 11 years in Operation**

Some deliveries were made by TrueGift supporters in Davis and San Andreas to save driving. The cost of packaging and postage for deliveries made through the US Mail can exceed the cost of the supplies shipped. With this in mind, the bulk of all donations went to schools in the San Francisco Bay Area where deliveries could be made in person.

TrueGift also facilitates, through its online registry, in-kind donations of supplies directly to classrooms. Donations to accredited schools are usually tax-deductible. By delivering supplies themselves or via U.S. mail, donors can make certain that 100% of their contribution reaches the desired classroom(s). By informing TrueGift of their donation, they can help keep the registry up to date. TrueGift likes this approach because it accomplishes our mission without requiring any effort from us, and it promotes more communication between donors and teachers.

We are unsure of the reasons for the substantial preference that donors have for simply writing a check instead of shopping. Certainly convenience is a factor. Perhaps efficiency is too. Due to our seasonal sale shopping and bulk purchases, TrueGift can often get twice as many supplies for the same contribution.

Both donation methods rely on an accurate registry and a reliable way of keeping it up to date. Since TrueGift is an all-volunteer organization, the registry must be more or less automatic. It was up and running at the start of the school year, thanks to the continuing efforts of Charles Merriam. The website also works as an effective way to explain TrueGift's mission and provides a tangible presence for the organization. With this in mind, Jennifer Merriam (Graphic Communication major, Cal Poly SLO) was kind



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enough to bring a new look and frequent updates to our site this year. At year end, the site had registered 153 teachers from 67 schools in 9 states. Because of our emphasis on local delivery, out-of-state registrations benefit mostly from local donors delivering directly.

TrueGift has had a few personnel changes. We are sad to see the departure of Charles Merriam, our CEO and a founding member of TrueGift. Charles is returning to other opportunities in high tech, but will continue to assist with the website now and then. Hugh Merriam will pick up the reins. Joining the team is Jennifer Merriam, fresh from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. Jennifer helps with product testing, web design, and fundraising.

Calendar year 2010 marked the eleventh year of operation for TrueGift Donations. We expect TrueGift to continue operations in 2011 and donate approximately \$5,000 worth of supplies to various schools. The challenge is to provide maximum efficiency for our donors while continuing to provide critically needed supplies to America's schools.



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## Financial Statement 1/1/2010-12/31/2010

### Source of Funds

Opening Balance	809
Direct Contributions	4275
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Total funds Available	5084

### Uses of Funds

Supplies Delivered	3408
Packing Supplies	247
Year End Balance	1500
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Change in inventory (presumed) <sup>1</sup>	(71)
	5084

1. No physical inventory was performed. The presumed \$71 drop in inventory looks plausible. That is, the shelves are about as full as they were at the beginning of the year.



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## Corporate and Non-Profit Sponsors



*Pacific Gas and  
Electric Company*

Pacific Gas and Electric Company- PG&E has been a strong supporter since 2003.