

STORIES of INSPIRATION
2020

S.P.A.R.K

Society



All it takes is a spark.

2020 S.P.A.R.K. SOCIETY INSPIRING OTHERS

At Midwest Financial Group, philanthropy is part of our culture. It's through the S.P.A.R.K. (Small Purposeful Acts of Random Kindness) Society that we are able to share in the opportunity to give back directly, to localized causes, special needs individuals, families facing challenges, and community outreach. The S.P.A.R.K. Society is dedicated to inspiring positive change and enriching the lives closest around us and it is our goal to make the world around us a better place, one spark at a time.

Over the past five years, those that have participated have been an imperative part of this amazing and powerful initiative and have truly helped make the world a better place. That is why this year, we asked our S.P.A.R.K. Society Alumni Members for their help in making the S.P.A.R.K. Society grow and evolve. We asked the S.P.A.R.K. Society Alumni Members to pledge by selecting a cause and to continue to do something great, or give to a person or organization in need of financial support by donating their time, provide financial support to those in need, supplies, or just doing an act of random kindness. Their pledge, offers great returns on investment, by providing opportunities to others and for those they help one day be able to pay it forward themselves.

With that, the S.P.A.R.K. Society was able to ask new members to receive a \$100 VISA gift card in the hope that with it, they would create a Small Purposeful Act of Random Kindness and do something great, or to give the card to a person or organization that would.

There were no expectations of repayment, no strings attached, but that the recipient would use the gift in a way to achieve something truly meaningful, and share the results with the giver.

Here are their stories.

S . P . A . R . K
Society

S.P.A.R.K. 2020

Society

“Hunger Fighters”

Our daughter’s Girl Scout troop has been focusing on additional ways they can help support their community by taking action. We thought the S.P.A.R.K. Society and it’s message would be a great way to combine the amazing efforts of the society with the message she was learning through her troop! This season the troop was working on gathering donations for the Oregon area food pantry. We had her call the pantry, introduce herself, and ask what items they needed most. We then took her to the grocery store with the list and helped her choose the items that would maximize her action and get the most for the pantry. As you can see by the picture, she is a thrifty shopper! Olivia was very proud of the impact she was able to have after dropping off the food to the pantry!

- Ryan, Heather, and Olivia (Oregon, WI)

\$100 S.P.A.R.K. Society VISA Card



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S.P.A.R.K 2020

Society

“Be Thankful”

A young woman, a single mom who is a special needs teacher, is raising three children on her own. She has a 15 year old daughter, Alyssa, that was originally diagnosed with Lupus when she was in elementary school. Alyssa's has faced numerous health issues since that diagnosis and her condition was slowly deteriorating through the years. Recently after being hospitalized due to a no response situation, a doctor diagnosed her with a rare auto-immune system disease named Behcets. The disease is four possible conditions within one: multiple sclerosis, Chrohn's, celiac & lupus. There is no cure for this disease. The only treatment is to find medicines to control the symptoms and a strict diet in order for her to lead a better quality of life.

Alyssa's mom has limited income & people to help her to provide for family. She is an upbeat person, always smiling and a caring person in spite of her personal life situation.

My act of kindness was to provide her with gas money when they travel to Mayo clinic to meet with a specialist, or to provide a meal as an unexpected treat to her family or possibly a Starbucks morning treat to get her through her day. She and her family so deserves any help to get them through this trying time.

- Madison, WI

*S.P.A.R.K. Society Alumni
\$300 Donation*



All it takes is a spark.

S.P.A.R.K 2020

Society

“The Road To Recovery Begins Here”

A generous gift of \$300 was made by a participant in our program to an organization that helped their family in a time that it was truly needed, Tellurian of Madison, WI, which is a Drug and Alcohol rehabilitation center.

- Oregon, WI

S.P.A.R.K. Society Alumni
\$300 Donation

Don't Be Ashamed of your story

addiction is real.
so is recovery.

It will Inspire others

At Tellurian, we firmly believe that every person struggling with mental health and substance use disorder has the ability to recover. Our clients receive psychological and medical care, based on their individual diagnosis, from our dually- certified, experienced, treatment team.

By offering compassion and understanding, combined with evidence-based treatment modalities, our staff is focused on meeting the individual needs of each client.



All it takes is a spark.

S.P.A.R.K. 2020

Society

“Roots To Grow - Wings To Fly”

They are a beautiful family of 3 – a Mom, a Dad, and a young boy. Like many families, they love each other and are trying to juggle life in a pandemic. Mom and Dad take every precaution to be as safe as possible while they perform their essential duties as grocery and janitorial employees. The son is also doing his best as he tries to adjust to the demands of the virtual school environment.

One obstacle that has been especially difficult is not having a reliable computer at home. Sometimes it works and, increasingly, often it does not. The parents know how important this is to his education, yet they also have very limited resources. The income they do have is stretched thin and is seldom enough to cover rent, food, medicine, clothing, utilities, transportation, and the other many costs of living. Even so, they have been saving their money since school started, hoping to surprise their boy with a new laptop for the spring semester.

Thanks to the SPARK \$100 they do not have to wait until spring! Now they can take advantage of holiday sales and surprise their son with a brand new, fully functioning laptop for Christmas.

- Madison, WI

\$100 S.P.A.R.K. Society VISA Card



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S.P.A.R.K 2020

Society



“Helping Hands”

This recipient is a single mom who lost both her house and her husband in the last two years. Shortly after the loss of her husband, she suffered a heart attack and had bypass surgery. She is currently furloughed from her job in food service for a local elementary school. She always presents herself in a positive way. Despite everything she has gone through. Her daughter 12 yrs old is her whole world.

I feel so blessed to be able to help her out in these trying times. With the mission of S.P.A.R.K. Society in mind I am honored to pay her rent for one month and present her with \$1,000 to help her provide for her and her daughter.

- Vicki (Middleton, WI)

*S.P.A.R.K. Society Alumni
\$1,000 Donation*

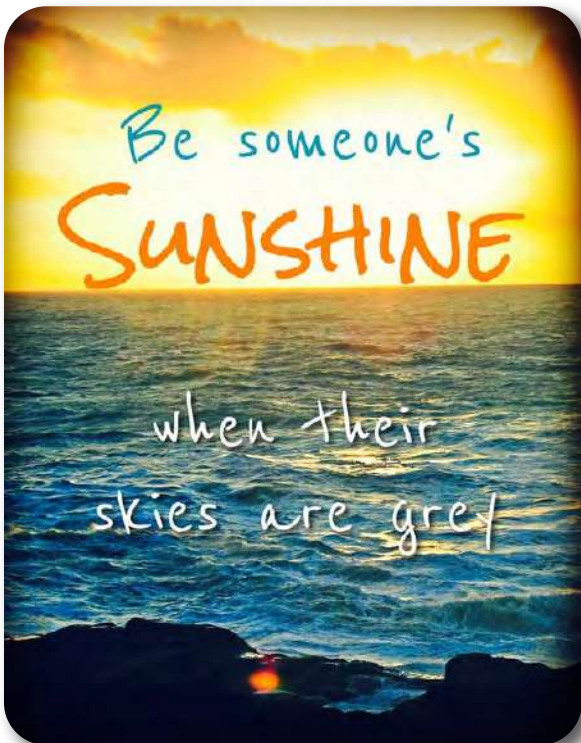


All it takes is a spark.

S.P.A.R.K. 2020

Society

“Paying It Forward To Random Strangers”



We were able to surprise so many people with our random act of kindness. So many surprised faces - no names, just \$10 here and \$10 there, to help pay for their grocers. Because being kind unexpectedly for a complete stranger can be contagious and make the recipient want to pay it forward too.

- Oregon, WI

\$100 S.P.A.R.K. Society VISA Card



All it takes is a spark.

S.P.A.R.K 2020

Society

“Choose Joy”

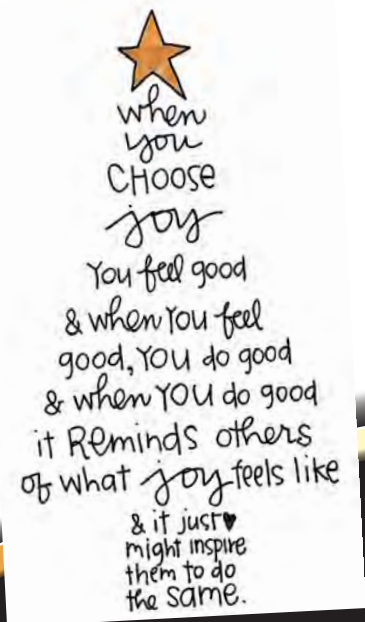
My wife, Kathie, works for the Middleton School District. Normally, she drives a bus, but due to COVID-19, she has been asked to be a “Kathie of all Trades”, from driving her bus to deliver meals during the summer, to working in the Library at Sunset Ridge School helping to manage the distribution of books and resources once remote school was finally up and running. At the library, she works to pull together book requests and set up for parents to pick up their student’s books and resources. Thursdays are a busy day with over a hundred book pickups each week! This year has been such a difficult year for everyone, and especially on schools, staff, faculty, and kids, and it has certainly taken its toll.

When I mentioned to her about the SPARK program, she said, “I may have need of that card!” She told me that there is a family with kids at both the elementary schools and middle school in dire need of assistance this year. She had heard that both parents lost their jobs due to COVID-19 and that we really hurting. Frankly, it looked as though they would not have any money for presents for their kids. They have three kids who all love Christmas. The thought of not having money for gifts was heartbreaking for Kathie. She made the necessary contacts with the school staff and made sure the SPARK gift card made its way to the parents. They were elated!

The spirit of Christmas and the sense of caring was felt throughout the district as word of the Small Purposeful Act of Random Kindness got around! Not only did this specifically touch the lives of the family blessed with the gift card, but an entire school district was also touched, knowing that one more family’s Christmas was made better!

- Fitchburg, WI

\$100 S.P.A.R.K. Society VISA Card



All it takes is a spark.

S.P.A.R.K 2020

Society

“Live Your Life And Forget Your Age”



We decided to Contribute to the Oregon Area Senior Center for it's work and dedication to the senior population in the greater Oregon, WI area. The center is a hub of resources and during this past year the COVID situation has hit this vulnerable population very hard. The center has noticed that folks have been especially lonely. The Director was so moved with our contribution that she plans to use the gift to train her staff in the TimeSlips (timeslips.org) story telling engagement tool. For more on the Oregon Area Senior Center see: OASC1980@gmail.com.



The mission of the Oregon Area Senior Center is to provide support, services and opportunities for older adults to remain as independent as possible, in their homes and in their own communities.

The purpose of the Oregon Area Senior Center is to support the older adults in the Oregon School District intellectually, physically, socially and emotionally in their quests to remain independent and in the community.



- Oregon, WI

*S.P.A.R.K. Society Alumni
\$100 Donation*



All it takes is a spark.

S.P.A.R.K 2020

Society



Kiwaniis® **Serving The Children Of The World**

We presented a single mother from our church with the Visa card to help her in her pursuit of becoming a Lutheran minister. She's employed at the local Kiwanis store, is on the church council board, volunteers as a leader in the Hispanic services at our church, records Sunday services via zoom in order to bring the ministry during this pandemic to our congregation and serves in many other areas as needed. She is struggling financially and was very thankful for the gift we presented to her.

In our humble giving, we were blessed to understand how much one gesture of kindness can mean to someone in need.

*Serving the
Children
of the World*



- Lehigh Acres, FL

\$100 S.P.A.R.K. Society VISA Card



All it takes is a spark.

S.P.A.R.K. 2020

Society

Teamwork Is All About “Community”

Since I am in a group considered to be especially at risk during the COVID-19 crisis, I have been isolated from outside activities where I might otherwise note when an act of unexpected kindness might just make a real difference to someone. I asked a woman who IS directly involved in our community to select the recipient of this spark. She (and her sibling-owned group) employs recent immigrants to this country, job-train and otherwise support them via their local home and office cleaning company. Their employees work in small teams and first become members of this smaller community; many strive to start independent small business ventures on their own. None have an easy life.



It is my hope that this gift will, at the very least, provide a brightness and warmth, perhaps even additional energy, that will aid in someone's life and will keep it moving forward.

(It is my understanding that the gift will probably become help in the disrupted life of relatives who are currently suffering the effects of the Gulf area hurricanes).

- Madison, WI

*\$100 S.P.A.R.K. Society VISA Card
plus \$250 Donation*



All it takes is a spark.

S.P.A.R.K 2020

Society

“Second Chances”

The beauty of life is,
while we cannot undo
what is done, we can
see it, understand it,
learn from it and change
so that every new
moment is spent not in
regret, guilt, fear or
anger but in wisdom,
understanding and love.

Heartfeltquotes.blogspot.com

Jennifer Edwards

We became aware of a person who is in a county jail with multiple charges. The charges cover a variety of things but stem back to the person's drug use. We decided to support this person while in jail to help keep this person clean. Rather than initially provide bail money, we wanted this person to get through the initial withdrawal period of drug use and come to a place where the person could think more clearly about their future.

We supported this person while in jail by providing money to contact family members and provide commissary items. Sometimes it's difficult to exactly know how to best help a person who is going through a very challenging time and we hope that supporting this person in these ways has allowed the person to remain connected to family while keeping the person safe.

- Poynette, WI

*S.P.A.R.K. Society Alumni
\$1,000 Donation*



All it takes is a spark.

S.P.A.R.K. 2020

Society



“Eliminate Hunger”

As an alumnus of the S.P.A.R.K. Society I know how much fun it is to give a donation to someone in need.

This year we're in the throes of a pandemic and there are so many more needy families, so I decided to triple last year's donation. My first thought was to find a family who lost a loved one to COVID-19 and as a result might be struggling, but all my inquiries were unfruitful. I decided it was for the best given the need to social distance these days.

I wanted to help as many families as I could and I wanted to maximize my donation as much as possible. I learned of a project organized by Thrivent whereby they would match \$1 for every \$2 donated on-line to the Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin. I donated \$100, making my donation worth \$150.

I wanted to feel more physically and personally involved in giving. I became aware of the NBC15 Share Your Holidays to eliminate hunger campaign. I went to Costco and brought over \$100 of the most needed items from their list. It felt more personal as I took part in the drive through drop off at the Alliant Center on December 3rd.

Lastly, I donated \$100 to a niece whose family has been going through a very difficult time and I knew she could really use the financial support. I knew it would make her very happy because it would be totally unexpected.

- Madison, WI

S.P.A.R.K. Society Alumni

\$300 Donation



All it takes is a spark.

S.P.A.R.K. 2020

Society

“ART, in itself is an attempt to bring order out of chaos.”

While this is not your typical “pay it forward” act, it has potential to support the greater health of the Madison community. Artists are some of the most significantly displaced individuals in the workforce right now. Through donations, the Overture Center artists (Symphony and Opera) have been able to live stream free holiday performances. These performances were viewed by so many individuals that their websites crashed/froze! Luckily, the recordings are still out there for people to enjoy for free. I personally forwarded the live stream link to individuals I know were in need of some holiday cheer.

- Sharon (Madison, WI)

\$100 S.P.A.R.K. Society VISA Card

I regard the theatre as the greatest of all art forms, the most immediate way in which a human being can share with another the sense of what it is to be a human being.

- Oscar Wilde



All it takes is a spark.

S.P.A.R.K. 2020

Society

Veterans

THANK YOU

Midwest Financial Group introduced us to the S.P.A.R.K. Society several years back. From that time we have gone forward looking into the Madison Community needs. Every year we heard from other S.P.A.R.K. Alumni and ways of assisting the Community of those in need. We have heard some remarkable stories of helping others. Over the past years, we have found other ways in giving hands on or financially.

In these times there are so many in need. We want to find ways on how we could reach out to more in the community. You do not have to look far to see or hear those who could use some assistance today. We found ways that we felt that could reach as many as possible.

Moving forward as a Veteran, I have been fortunate in my life. We want to help Veterans in Dane County. There is a fund handled by Dane County Veteran Service to assist Vets. Not only does the Dane County Veteran Service assist in applying for benefits, but give funds to assist the Vets single or families in need as rent, food, utilities, and clothes. I thank those at the Dane County Veteran Service for all they do. The Service manages this fund to reach as many as possible.

In addition, we give to the Second Harvest Pantry. As we watch on the news of how many are looking to feed their families. So throughout the year, we give funds to these and others as we find them.

- John & Jane (Madison, WI)

*S.P.A.R.K. Society Alumni
On-going Donation*



All it takes is a spark.

S.P.A.R.K. 2020

Society



Being able to be a part of the SPARK program has allowed me to help a cause I am passionate about. I am part of a group of six that has come together to help lost dogs. We met while searching for dogs and to date have found 21 lost dogs. Six of them fosters with a rescue, four that were recently adopted rescues, five that had been from a rescue, five that were "rehomed" and one we believed was dumped at a truck stop. Our goal is to save the dogs, no matter what it takes. That has included adventures like nightly stakeouts in cemeteries, trapping at a county dump, and having to release the local wildlife from a trap to name a few.

One of the invaluable tools we use is cellular trail cams. These allow us to monitor a dog without being there and scaring them away. Some of the dogs we have caught have been up to an hour away from us. In those cases we rely on local help to put out food daily for the dog while we monitor with the cameras. Without local help or cameras, our capacity to help would be limited. When it is time to set the trap, we can be nearby

and out of sight, ready to respond as soon as the door closes. The SPARK card gave us the funds needed to buy another cellular trail cam.

One of the dogs we trapped was a stray we named Millie. We became involved in the search on June 8, 2019 when a sighting of her was reported to Lost Dogs of Wisconsin. We went to the area that day and saw her watch us put out food for her. But she never returned to that spot. Sightings were few and far between. Some sightings reported days after she was spotted. We had a confirmed sighting on August 5th that was 2.3 miles from the first sighting. Bait and cameras were placed on the 7th, a trap a day later. She came regularly every night between 8:30 and 9:00 and spent most of the night hanging around the trap. On Sunday night the 11th, we made the trip to set the trap. She was trapped a couple of hours later. We took her to a garage to release her from the trap and scan her for a chip. She had one but when the owner was called, he told us she had run away right after he got her, the first week of April, and he didn't want her back. He had never looked for her or reported her missing. From the chip we learned, she was three years old and originally came from TX about 2-1/2 years before. She tested positive for Lyme's disease and has an old fracture on her back. We surrendered her to a humane society where she spent a few months recuperating before being adopted.

Watching dogs be reunited with their owners or be adopted by a family where they are loved is very rewarding and makes everything we do to capture them worthwhile.

- Lori (Madison, WI)

\$100 S.P.A.R.K. Society VISA Card

We just recently received an update. "She likes to boss our other dog, Kavik, around, but otherwise no issues. She doesn't show any symptoms of her Lyme disease and is always a cuddle bug." I choose this dog because no one but us were looking for her, she was on her own for four months and the pictures show the most extreme before and after.



All it takes is a spark.

S.P.A.R.K. 2020

Society



“Today a Reader. Tomorrow a Leader.”

-Margaret Fuller

Having taught 5th grade for a very short time, I realize how important it is that children learn to read in the early grades. By 5th grade most of the subjects rely on children knowing how to read, such as social studies, science, and math. I've been fortunate that my three children were all interested in reading and we made many trips to the library in those early years. I realize not all children have that opportunity, so if they have their own books they can always ask a parent or friend to read to them or read by themselves. It's a way for parents and children to bond or for children to bond with their books. My 18 month old grandson already likes to look at his car and doggie board books.

I chose to donate books to the Madison Reading Project, purchasing books at a variety of grade levels from Books4School. I hope it starts a reading SPARK in the recipients!

- Madison, WI

\$100 S.P.A.R.K. Society VISA Card



All it takes is a spark.

S.P.A.R.K 2020

Society

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations”

Matthew 28:19

We have been committed to helping those in need of food security for many years. Because of the pandemic the need has grown dramatically. Through our parish, St. Thomas Aquinas in Madison, we have decided to contribute an additional \$100 each month to their food bank. This has resulted in \$1,000 contributed so far this year. We are grateful for the gifts we have and are fortunate to be able to share those gifts with others.

Thank you to Midwest Financial Group for helping to make that happen!

- Nat & Deb (Middleton, WI)

S.P.A.R.K. Society Alumni

\$1,000 Donation



ST. THOMAS AQUINAS
CATHOLIC PARISH



All it takes is a spark.

S.P.A.R.K. 2020

Society

“The Road Less Traveled”

I belong to the Madison Poker Community, a group of people who play poker tournaments at local bars in the area. During these tournaments a small portion of each buy-in is taken out for charity, and then at the end of the year they decide which charities to give to.



Madison Poker Community Facebook page

Admin · December 5 at 1:07 PM · 🌐

Another week, another donation! This week's #mpcgivesback donation of \$200 is going to Movin' Out thanks to the suggestion of MPC Member, [Scott Wieland](#). If you'd like to make an additional donation on behalf of the MPC, you can do so here... <https://www.movin-out.org/donate>

Over the years, Movin' Out has compiled an impressive record of success in helping people with permanent disabilities, and their families, to find and maintain housing of their choice in communities throughout Wisconsin.

They only had three months of live play this year, but the Madison Poker Community was still able to collect \$600 to give to three charities. Movin' Out was awarded \$200.

I donated an additional \$50 of the S.P.A.R.K. Society dollars to Movin' Out and another \$50 to The Road Home. Both causes helping the community and those most in need.



Movin' Out believes that everyone deserves a safe, affordable place to live and thrive. They understand that housing is the key to living a better, healthier, and more stable life. When housing works well, everything else in life can be a little easier — work, education, healthcare, transportation. It can all add up to improved well-being and thriving communities.

The Road Home of Dane County provides opportunities for homeless children and their families to achieve self-determined goals and affordable, stable housing.



Every child deserves a home

- Mount Horeb, WI

\$100 S.P.A.R.K. Society VISA Card



All it takes is a spark.

S.P.A.R.K. 2020

Society

“Feed The Community”

We would like to begin by thanking the S.P.A.R.K. Society for inviting us to participate in the 2020 initiative. Thanks to your generosity, we were excited to be able to double the amount of the gift card to provide 3 Thanksgiving food baskets for the Goodman Center to distribute to families in our own community so that they may have a nice meal.

A year ago, we decided to give a monetary gift to the Goodman Center at Thanksgiving time as a way of showing our gratitude for the many Blessings we have received. It was a good feeling to be able to share. When the S.P.A.R.K.



Society invited us to join in this year's initiative, we knew immediately what we wanted to do with the gift card. Due to the impact of COVID-19, the Goodman Center has set a goal of gathering enough donations to help 4,000 families. At approximately \$70 per basket, it is quite a lofty goal. We are so happy to be able to help the Goodman Center help people in our community.

- Madison, WI

*S.P.A.R.K. Society Alumni
\$210 Donation*



All it takes is a spark.

S.P.A.R.K 2020

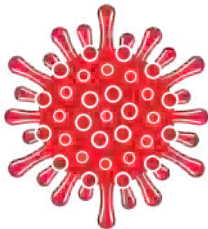
Society



“2020 Pandemic”

The entire world has been impacted by COVID-19 in some way. People are suffering with the death of loved ones, illness, burnout and exhaustion, job losses, hunger, virtual education and the loss of a lifestyle they loved and were comfortable with. The most important thing we need to do is prevent more COVID-19 cases and deaths. Many medical-related businesses are involved with vaccine development and how it will be distributed.

I decided to donate \$100 to the Mayo Clinic COVID-19 Clinical Fund Testing Capability/Overall COVID-19 Response as they have been on the medical forefront for research, education and the best patient care worldwide. May this little spark be added to the other SPARK's they've received in working to eradicate COVID-19.



COVID-19
CORONAVIRUS

- Madison, WI

\$100 S.P.A.R.K. Society VISA Card



All it takes is a spark.

S.P.A.R.K 2020

Society

“Give Thanks...Give Life”

We had numerous choices, but had not made a final decision until our family had a life changing event. On October 19th my 1st cousin's 29 year old son died after an unexplained UTV accident. He was a true athlete himself and headed to his alma mater High School football game. He had recently moved back to his mother's home planning to go back to school.

When he didn't return home and was not answering his cell his mother went looking for him. She found him on the trail with a severe head injury. He was taken to Mayo Health Systems. All efforts were made but due to the extent of the injury, he was determined to be brain dead.

He had a great smile, with a kind hearted soul who truly never had a bad word to say about anybody. He was also an organ donor. Many people have the chance to live or had their lives made better. His true passion was the “Feed My People Food Bank” - every summer he planted a huge garden and donated it all.

We immediately knew where we wanted to employ our S.P.A.R.K gift to honor this amazing and generous man.

- Fitchburg, WI

\$100 S.P.A.R.K. Society VISA Card



GIVING
IS THE
GREATEST
ACT OF
GRACE.

All it takes is a spark.

S.P.A.R.K. 2020

Society

“Shinning A Light On Hope”

We decided to donate to Porchlight in Madison, WI. Porchlight is a non-profit agency that strives to reduce homelessness in Dane County by collaborating with the community and empowering the individuals and families they serve.

Porchlight's story began in November 1984, when multiple people experiencing homelessness froze to death on the streets of Madison. They provide emergency shelter, outreach services, eviction prevention, employment services, recovery support, and affordable transitional and permanent housing to over 8,000 people annually.

They offer an employment-training program called Porchlight Products, which works with disabled and formerly homeless individuals who have struggled to return to or remain in a mainstream employment setting. Trainees learn basic job skills such as proper hygiene and time management, as well as the skills to take raw ingredients and turn them into quality food products. These products (e.g. apple sauce, sauerkraut, multi-grain pancake mix, etc.) are then available at local stores and on the menus of area restaurants.



After COVID cases have dwindled, I hope to volunteer for Porchlight in some capacity. Until then, I thought they would really appreciate the financial support. Thank you to MFG for creating the S.P.A.R.K. Society!

- Kara & Eric (Madison, WI)

\$100 S.P.A.R.K. Society VISA Card



All it takes is a spark.

S.P.A.R.K 2020

Society



“Volunteer. Donate. Care.”

The Beacon is a day resource center for the homeless in Dane County. Catholic charities operates this facility in partnership with Madison and the United Way. They're a private partnership working to provide community solutions to help men, women, and children who are experiencing homelessness in Dane County, Wisconsin. They provide a meal, showers and wellness services along with housing and job assistance. Over 225 men, women and children use the Beacon every day of the year.

We have known homeless people and this service is much needed to support them. That is why we are providing our S.P.A.R.K. Society gift card to this fine facility. In recognition of your support, we have matched your contribution of \$100. Keep up this fine work, and it's a credit to your organization that you do this.

- Stevens Point, WI

*\$100 S.P.A.R.K. Society VISA Card
plus \$100 Donation*

**An Amazing
Volunteer**
Offers their gift of time
INSPIRES HOPES & DREAMS
Enjoys Helping Others
ENCOURAGES TEAMWORK
IS SELFLESS, GENEROUS & KIND
EXTENDS A HELPING HAND
& *Makes a difference*



All it takes is a spark.

S.P.A.R.K 2020

Society



“The best gift around a Christmas Tree is family”

Our gift went to a family in Wisconsin Rapids. Two years ago on Christmas Eve little Malcom was diagnosed with neuroblastoma. He has two siblings, both on the autism spectrum. Their father's place of employment is closing down, possibly by year-end. This family has been separated numerous times on holidays, birthdays, and family celebrations due to travel to Madison and Mayo Clinic for treatments. Mom is hoping to spend a “normal” holiday together as a family this Christmas in between travels for treatment. We purchased gifts for all of the kids from a wish list from mom and sent them to her so there will be gifts under their tree. We have not met the family, just know about them through community events and fundraisers.

This has been a year like none other for all of us in many different ways! We hope this family is able to be together for Christmas and enjoy a momentary reprieve from the uncertainty that is ahead of them.

- Stevens Point, WI

S.P.A.R.K. Society Alumni

\$200 Donation



All it takes is a spark.

S.P.A.R.K 2020

Society



Like me, she enjoys lunch alfresco on a warm, sunny day and yes, those are her real eyelashes (I'm so jealous!).

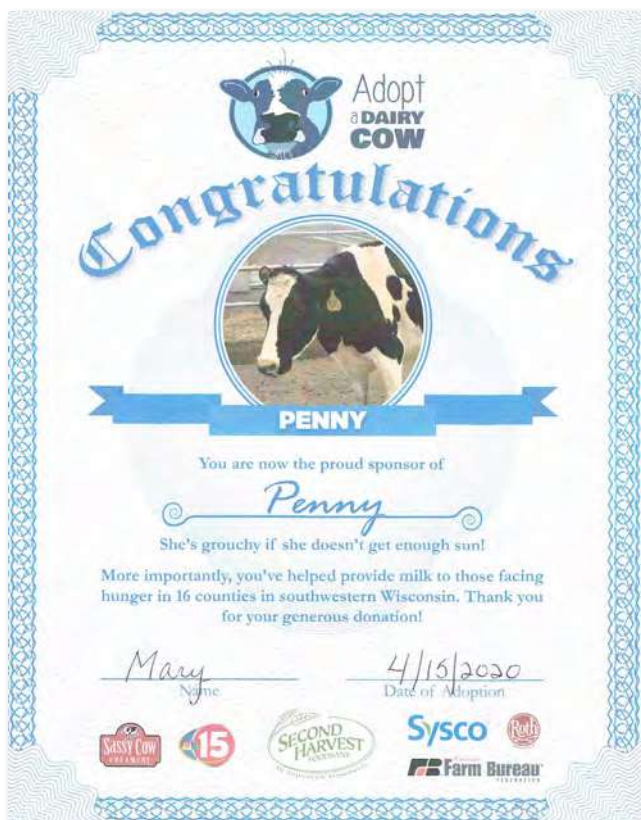
Here's Penny, one of the cows at Sassy Cow Creamery. While toilet paper was scarce earlier in the pandemic, there was a surplus of milk. Second Harvest partnered with local farmers not only to help our local dairy industry, but also help those struggling with hunger.

I chose to "adopt" Penny's milk production for one month and help reduce the "milk gap" (the difference between what is needed and what the food bank is able to provide).

As a farmer's daughter, this S.P.A.R.K. was more than a coincidence!

- Mary (Madison, WI)

*S.P.A.R.K. Society Alumni
\$1,080 Donation*



All it takes is a spark.

S.P.A.R.K. 2020

Society

9 Lives
RESCUE

“9 Lives”

I contributed to 9 Lives Rescue by donating money, goods, and my time fostering. I have contributed food, towels, blankets, bowls and large styrofoam boxes to build warming shelters for feral cats. 9 Lives Rescue is a small, foster based cat rescue serving the south central Wisconsin area.

They are lead by a trio of very dedicated women from Middleton and Stoughton. They are passionate about providing personalized adoptions and enriching the lives of people and animals by finding the right forever homes for homeless, unwanted, and abused cats and kittens. They have been known to camp out all night to capture abandoned ferals and kittens. Once captured, these cats are provided veterinary care. The ones who are social are taken off the streets forever (pun intended).

During this stay at home/COVID19 period, they are still adopting out cats and kittens. You can fill out an application and arrange to meet the cats in a safe way with distancing between people. During the pandemic, folks isolated from families and loved ones are finding a fuzzy companion can provide love and cuddles badly needed for. They are also looking for fosters. You can fill out a foster application!

Since 2016, 9 Lives has adopted more than 600 cats and kittens to such wonderful people and families and hope to continue to do so with support and volunteers! While this isn't a large number in itself, 9 Lives Rescue doing its small part in helping more cats and kittens to find wonderful homes instead of adding more to the overpopulation and homelessness.

- Sharon (Madison, WI)

\$100 S.P.A.R.K. Society VISA Card



All it takes is a spark.

S.P.A.R.K 2020

Society


“Give Thanks”

We came upon an idea from a friend of ours. It was a reverse advent calendar, meant to be given at Christmas, that we adapted for our S.P.A.R.K.

We compiled two boxes of 24 assorted food items (cereal, canned meat, fruit, veggies, soup, pasta & sauce, rice, etc.). We went to our local churches and gave the boxes to them to be distributed to a family in need because we wanted to directly impact a couple of families.

- Madison, WI

*S.P.A.R.K. Society Alumni
\$100 Donation*



If you can't feed
a hundred people,
then feed just one.
- Mother Teresa



All it takes is a spark.

S.P.A.R.K.
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