

Agronomic Science Foundation

Science Shows...It's Better to Give than Receive



Alexander Barton

*Director of Business
Development*

abarton@sciencesocieties.org

608-273-8095

Although the unsettled economy has had a dampening effect on fundraising, one of the iconic truths that has come down through the ages may be summed up in these words: It is better to give than to receive. Selfless concern for the welfare of others or altruism—basically the opposite of selfishness—is a traditional virtue of many of the world's greatest religions. Although the key to altruistic behavior is not being concerned with reward, science has found that it has far-reaching benefits that may surprise you.

In fact, a brain-imaging study by UCLA scientists has revealed that helping others benefits the givers, not just the recipients. The study found that reward-related regions of the brain—typically activated in response to such things as chocolate—showed increased activity when subjects engaged in altruistic behavior. According to the scientists, good deeds may be processed by the brain as a very basic type of rewarding experience. The study even showed that it may have stress-reducing effects.

You may know from your own personal experience how good it feels, and we truly appreciate the support our donors have shown during these challenging economic times. As those of you who have so generously given of your time and financial support know, the Agronomic Science Foundation (ASF) offers many ways to capture the wonderful feeling of putting others first.

A gift to a 501c(3) organization such as ASF is a great way to make a positive difference in the world today and possibly get a break on taxes. ASF uses your contribution to fund student programs, scholarships, lectureships, conferences, awards, international travel, and other programs not covered by Society membership dues. And you can take pride in the fact that your gift—no matter what size you are able to give—will have an impact on the future of agronomy, crop science, and soil science.

One of the most recognizable ASF funds is the **Golden Opportunity Scholars Institute**. More than 120 young alumni have been through the program and are considered to be some of the best incoming talent available in the life sciences. The Golden Opportunity Scholars Institute trains undergraduate students for a successful career path in the agronomic, crop, and/or soil sciences. Undergraduates ap-



2012 Golden Opportunity Scholars.

ply for travel support to the ASA, CSSA, and SSSA International Annual Meetings where they are matched with Society members who mentor them during the meetings and for a one-year period afterwards.

There are other funds that will also give you a chance to make a difference. The **Gateway Fund** inspires young students and guides them to a career in the agronomic, crop, and/or soil sciences. It provides funding to those who propose using innovative methods to identify, motivate, and recruit high school, undergraduate, and graduate students to the profession. Up to \$5,000 annually is available per successful proposal.

The **Pathway Fund** provides travel support for inspired young, energized scientists and professionals that will allow them to share scientific expertise in struggling areas around the world in six-month stints. Available to active members of ASA, CSSA, and SSSA early in their careers, the Pathway Fund provides up to \$15,000 for each successful proposal with the option for renewal.

Even though the Great Recession has been a game changer in the realm of charitable giving, we are familiar with another time-honored way that people have always helped others—through random acts of kindness. In fact Random Acts of Kindness Week will be celebrated later this month, 11–17 February, and might be a great time to take another look at the volunteer or giving opportunities offered by ASF through the Gateway Fund, the Golden Opportunities Scholars Institute, or the Pathway Fund.

Remember that no contribution of time or financial resources is too small to make a difference—and you won't just be helping to fight hunger around the world, but you might even benefit yourself as well. To find out more about options that might interest you, call me at 608-273-8095 or email me at abarton@sciencesocieties.org. To make a monetary donation online, visit www.a-s-f.org.

doi:10.2134/csa2013-58-2-12