



PRINT

O's Big Give Update

By Suzan Colon

Oprah.com | From the December 2009 issue of *O, The Oprah Magazine*



O's Big Give winners won \$5,000 each to spend on helping others. What they've done so far has given them a feeling money can't buy.

It's been just over a year since we announced the winners of O's Big Give Contest, which awarded \$5,000 each (provided by Target) and a mentor to readers with ambitious, inspiring plans for helping people in need. In time for the giving season, we checked in with three of these budding philanthropists to see how far they've come.

One of the most unusual Big Give proposals came from Kathleen Alves (above, back row, second from left, with residents of Madan, Papua New Guinea) of Chehalis, Washington. A registered nurse practitioner, Alves travels regularly to Madan, an impoverished farming community in Papua New Guinea, to treat children and adults who have been sickened by water-borne illnesses and other ailments. Alves estimated that one Big Give grant would cover the cost of constructing two wells; entrepreneur Dean Kamen (inventor

of the Segway) advised on engineering details, and the project broke ground last spring. The result: Madan's estimated 8,000 residents now have access to clean water. "This felt so good that I want to do more," says Alves, who will return to Madan next year to begin implementing a latrine system, [HIV testing](#), and other health improvements. "Once you start, it's addictive."

Next: [Giving the gift of music to children in New Orleans](#)

Many Big Give entries were aimed at helping children. It was New York City physician Barry Jaffin's now 13-year-old son, David, who came up with the idea of replacing musical instruments that New Orleans public schools lost in Hurricane Katrina. Mentor and musical legend Tony Bennett introduced the elder Jaffin to arts nonprofits such as the Gibson Foundation (Music Rising), Mr. Holland's Opus, and Bennett's own Exploring the Arts, all of which made additional donations. The total haul so far: \$100,000 worth of instruments, some of which made a joyful noise when the KIPP Believe College Prep symphonic and jazz bands performed in New Orleans earlier this year for an audience that included Bennett and the Jaffin family. (*To find out how to donate money or instruments to the Jaffins' project, go to [GivetheGiftofMusic.net](#) .*)

Next: [Funding a neighborhood photography club](#)