

BEST CHARITIES IN CHICAGO

20 standout nonprofits to support this season BY LEE CLIFFORD

YOUR NAME IN LIGHTS

Fancy a bit of public recognition for your giving? Here's what it'll cost. —KATE FLAIM



Gift \$50
Your name goes On a bookplate in the Chicago Botanic Garden's library



Gift \$500
Your name goes In the program at Lyric Opera



Gift \$5,000
Your name goes On a welcome bench at Lincoln Park Zoo



Gift \$10,000
Your name goes On the back cover of a CD from Cedille Records, a local non-profit classical music label



Gift \$20,000
Your name goes On a "cat condo" at PAWS Chicago's Lincoln Park Adoption Center



Gift \$100,000
Your name goes On the gear house that opens the Michigan Avenue Bridge (part of the McCormick Bridgehouse & Chicago River Museum)



Gift \$1 million
Your name goes Into the official name of the Special Collections department at Loyola University's library



Gift \$1.5 million
Your name goes On the 606 bridge that crosses over Milwaukee Avenue (the most biked road in the city!)



PAWS Chicago

pawschicago.org
2014 spending: \$10.6 million
Percentage spent on programming: 91

In 1997, when this grassroots organization was founded, more than 42,000 dogs, cats, and other pets were euthanized in the City of Chicago. Last year, fewer than 10,000 were. The credit for that huge drop goes largely to PAWS, which runs the largest pet adoption and foster programs in the city. (Here, volunteers bathe canine friends on the rooftop of the Lincoln Park Adoption Center in late September.) With its Lurie Clinic and mobile surgical van, PAWS also spayed or neutered 18,290 pets in 2014, offering nearly three-quarters of the procedures free of charge.

graduates can get valuable job experience. Beyond that, the organization has partnerships with a whopping 120-plus Chicago-area employers, including Marriott, JPMorgan Chase & Co., and Eataly.

vet care they need, our vet bills are rather high." Attention, feline fans: A complete remodel of the center's free-roam cat room is underway.

Greater Chicago Food Depository

chicagosfoodbank.org
2014 spending: \$107.7 million
Percentage spent on programming: 94

An astonishing one in six Cook County residents benefits from this food bank's services every year. Founded in 1979, it distributes donated and purchased food through a countywide network of 650 pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters. Impressively, this mainstay goes right where the need is: Its ProduceMobile delivers fresh fruits and vegetables to food deserts, and its popular Lunch Bus serves free healthy lunches to kids throughout the city in the summer.

Northern Illinois Food Bank

solvehungertoday.org
2014 spending: \$123.5 million
Percentage spent on programming: 98

There's plenty of need outside Cook County—and that's the focus of this far-flung network of pantries and soup kitchens, which provided more than 50 million meals last year. It serves Boone, DeKalb, DuPage, Grundy, Kane, Kankakee, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, Ogle, Stephenson, Will, and Winnebago counties, where Feeding America reports one in seven residents are at risk of hunger.

PETS

Save-A-Pet

saveapetil.org
2014 spending: \$1.5 million
Percentage spent on programming: 81

Though much smaller than PAWS (see description at left), this Grayslake organization goes above and beyond for each animal it serves and plays an important role in rescuing animals from "kill" shelters (it saved 308 last year). Programs include medical and behavioral assistance, adoption services, and referrals to low-cost spay and neuter services. Says Dominique Allion, president of the board: "Since we treat any medical condition and provide animals in need of special surgery all the

JUSTICE & EQUALITY

Chicago Legal Clinic

clclaw.org
2014 spending: \$3.9 million
Percentage spent on programming: 94

This 34-year-old clinic has evolved into a major provider of low-cost or pro bono legal assistance, serving an impressive 25,000 clients last year. Its sliding-scale fee structure is a particular boon to the working poor, who make a little too much to qualify for free legal services from the state.

Roger Baldwin Foundation of ACLU

aclu-il.org
2014 spending: \$3.3 million
Percentage spent on programming: 89

Illinois is the only state in the Midwest where women can get reproductive health care free from many burdensome restrictions. Fighting to keep it that way is the Illinois chapter of the ACLU—which since 1969 has been committed to defending all civil liberties guaranteed by the federal and state constitutions. In August of last year, the organization secured an agreement with the City of Chicago that will give transgender city workers insurance coverage for transition-related health care. Additionally, the nonprofit has been a huge force in the fight to end juvenile solitary confinement as we know it. "Working together, volunteer and staff attorneys protect the rights of tens of thousands of people and often set national precedents," notes Edwin C. Yohnka, director of communications and public policy.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Center for Enriched Living

centerforenrichedliving.org
2014 spending: \$2.2 million
Percentage spent on programming: 72

This center was created in the late '60s when two mothers couldn't find after-school programs for their disabled children. It served 468 members this year, who