

Benevolent Fact Sheet

Founder & CEO, Megan Kashner, and her team are early in the development and deployment of this platform. Launched officially on December 1, 2011, they are first testing and developing the site in the Chicago market and are gearing up now to add on the functionality and support necessary to expand into other geographies.

The Benevolent Model

- Sharp focus on critical one-time needs that represent progress towards personal sustainability
- Scalable and transparent model for validation and partnership, providing more than cursory assurances
- Individuals telling their own stories, with dignity and pride in their accomplishments and plans, leaving pity and shame behind
- A two-sided marketplace in which those in need are not paradoxically expected to attract their own donors
- Small-dollar donors can be transformative givers
- Building a community across strata and roles - expanding mutual understanding

Benevolent connects three different types of participants:

- Prospective donors: contributors who funnel funds to a specific need while also furthering Benevolent's mission
- Individuals in need: individuals with a specific one-time need
- Partner organizations: a local nonprofit or congregation that validates the needs of their constituents and fosters the secure transfer of funds

Mission

The mission of Benevolent is to bring dignity and self-determination to both sides of the giving equation, illuminating the realities of life on the edge of sustainability.

Organization Profile

Benevolent is an online site through which individuals with specific and one-time needs can describe and request help in meeting the financial portions of their needs. Donors on the Benevolent site determine which individual needs they wish to help meet and which local nonprofit organizations' clients or members are most compelling.

Benevolent's Statistics

Over \$14,600 donated by 279 individuals with 30 needs fully funded.

Fast Facts

- Founded in Spring of 2011 by Megan Kashner
- Early version of site launched December 1, 2011 and set to scale beyond the Chicago area by Summer of 2012
- The average donation is \$50
- The average amount of a funded need is \$485
- The average amount of a posted need is \$575

Future Features of Benevolent.net

- The back-end software to allow individuals and their nonprofit validators to enter and validate needs easily from their local computers
- Additional information for visitors to learn about the public policies and economic forces impacting those in low income circumstances
- A “shopping cart” that allows donors to contribute to more than one need per transaction, purchase giving certificates and contribute to benevolent partner nonprofits
- A more robust and interactive interpersonal messaging system
- Smart site functions that bring to each visitors’ new feed those stories and highlights most of interest to him or her

Company History

In February of 2011 Megan created the idea for Benevolent. Soon afterwards she explored, crafted and fine-tuned the concept with the help from seasoned professionals in finance, software development and entrepreneurship. By early summer of 2011 Julie F. Simpson signed on as Vice President of Strategy and Operations, bringing her leadership expertise from the nonprofit and philanthropic arenas. Together the two enlisted some of the brightest minds in their respective professions to sort out legal details, web development and serve on the Board of Directors.

By Autumn of 2011, Benevolent recruited team of volunteers and began developing partnerships with area nonprofits to capture the needs of individuals who live on the edge of stability. On December 1, 2011 Benevolent launched its pilot site, www.benevolent.net in the Metro Chicago. Within a month 10 different individuals had their needs met by 113 donors, creating a personal connection in giving and receiving. As Benevolent scales and grows beyond the Chicago community the organization will increase the number of successful needs met and donors.

In regards to her multifaceted background and her vision for the future, Megan states, “I always say I’m a Social Worker first. As we develop the Benevolent platform and community, though, I’ve had the opportunity to bring both my social service background as well as my MBA skills to bear. If we can use these two competencies and focuses to bring support to core needs for individuals, we’ll have achieved something both remarkable and sustainable.”

Executive Team Biographies



Megan Kashner, Founder & CEO

Megan is Benevolent's founder, CEO, tea-kettle refiller, blogger and overall chatterer. A seasoned nonprofit leader with over 20 years of strategic management, community partnership building and organizational planning.

Megan has spent her career leading organizations and programs dedicated to bringing innovation to the nonprofit sector and to improving social service support for women and families living in poverty and at risk. She has served as Executive Director for the Taproot Foundation and earlier for the Infant Welfare Society of Evanston, Chief Development Officer for Chicago's Deborah's Place and Program Director for organizations including the Howard Area Community Center, Methodist Youth Services and the Heartland Alliance.

Megan is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with a BA in Public Policy and American Civilization from Brown University, a master's degree from University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration and an MBA from Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management. A frequent panelist and presenter at conferences, Megan most recently presented a session introducing Benevolent at the Independent Sector conference, on a panel about achieving scale at Kellogg's Innovating Social Change Conference, at the Axelson Symposium presenting a new approach to service enterprise for nonprofits and on a panel about corporate commitments to skilled volunteerism at the National Conference on Volunteering and Service.

A New York to Chicago transplant, Megan and her partner live in Evanston, IL where they raise their two children, attend more than their fill of soccer games and play frequent games of Mario Kart before bedtime.



Julie F. Simpson, VP of Strategy and Operations

Julie is known throughout Chicago, and the country, as someone who will do whatever it takes to get a job done. From late 2006, she served as the Executive Director of Urban Gateways, where she re-branded and re-energized this nationally recognized pioneer of arts education dedicated to ensuring equitable opportunities for young people, by fully engaging it within a larger community-development context. One of Julie's numerous accomplishments while at the helm was establishing impact frameworks, organizational outcomes and metrics by which the organization could gauge its success.

Prior to her work with Urban Gateways, Julie served as the founding Executive Director of the Cricket Island Foundation in New York City, a national family foundation providing grants to empower youth to lead social change. In 1998, Julie launched the Center for Community Arts Partnerships (CCAP) at Columbia College Chicago, and as Executive Director, built it into an international model for college/community reciprocity with a staff of 48 and a \$5 million annual budget. Previous to founding CCAP, Julie had established her reputation as one of the country's leading presenters of contemporary dance and performance while serving as the Executive Director of the Dance Center of Columbia College. During that time, she was named to Crain's 40 under 40, a prestigious recognition of Chicagoans who have made a major impact in their respective industries before the age of 40. Julie also co-founded the DanceAfrica Chicago Festival and served as its Executive Producer for its first twelve years.

In addition to her work with Benevolent, Julie continues to share her expertise as a seasoned advisor and strategist by providing organizational and programmatic consulting services to other philanthropic and non-profit agencies throughout the U.S. and abroad as Principal of Simpson Consulting. She has published numerous articles on cross-sector community development and partnership building, and is asked frequently to present at major conferences on a wide variety of topics.

Julie is raising four amazing sons, all of whom have athletic proclivities, with her husband, Bob Heuer, a free-lance journalist and policy analyst.

Company Headquarters

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