

Originally Published: July 26, 2018 4:20 PM

New giving group aims to give young professionals a way to engage with social causes

By **Sherri Welch**

Millennials are thought to be among the most socially conscious generations, but opportunities for them to engage with social causes aren't always easy to find.

Water bucket challenges and other social media-pressured causes are fine. But some millennials are at a point where they would like to have more impact, said Michelle Denno.



Michelle Denno is the founder of 100+ Millennials Who Care.

That thought has led the 29-year-old to found 100+ Millennials Who care, a new giving group she plans to officially launch in September.

Does the name sound familiar?

It's the latest among a spate of giving groups in Michigan and across the country replicating a Jackson, Mich., group and model launched in 2006.

Denno has been a member of 100 Women Who Care-Greater Rochester for the past four years. She and other members of the group commit \$100 each quarter and attend a quarterly meeting where potential nonprofit grantees are nominated. The group then chooses one to support with the pool of money from members for that quarter. With 100 members, the money adds up quickly to \$10,000.

The grantee comes back the next quarter to share the impact their grant made, and a new grantee is chosen for the new quarter.

Denno, who is vice president of operations at Renaissance Capital Alliance in Troy, is always the youngest person at the Rochester group's quarterly grant meetings.

"There's something wrong with that. I think it's a great concept," she said. "(And) I have so many friends that constantly ask me where can we go to help and what can we do to help."

So she called friends, family and co-workers and set up a steering committee of 10 people in January. They adopted the model from 100 + Women but tweaked it slightly to appeal to millennials, Denno said.

"Our meetings are that same short one-hour meeting. But before or after, you can grab a drink and network with other millennials that are there."

100+ Millennials Who Care plans its first grant meeting Sept. 19 at Emagine Royal Oak. Pre-registration is requested (<http://www.100millennialswhocare.com>).

Three people will be chosen to talk about the charity they are nominating for a grant for 5 minutes. Members will then have the same amount of time to ask questions on that charity.

After all three charity cases for funding are heard, members will vote on one to receive funding for the quarter. Denno said she's looking for an electronic platform that will enable members to vote by cell phone, but the first vote could be old school, done on paper.

UHY LLP, which is donating \$1,000 to each of 50 different organizations this year in celebration of its 50th anniversary, selected 100+ Millennials Who Care to receive one of the grants, Denno said, after a friend nominated the group.

The \$1,000 sponsorship will be awarded as a bonus to the winning charity for the quarter, on top of what members donate.

Already, 40 people who have heard about the group from friends or family have signed up to attend, Denno said.

"This is something that's a low commitment," she said, with donations of \$100 (or \$1.09 each day) and a one-hour meeting four times a year

It's also something fun, providing a great way to network and meet people at a central location, Denno said.

"(But) the biggest thing is we're helping the local community."

Use of editorial content without permission is strictly prohibited. All rights Reserved 2018

www.crainsdetroit.com