

JUNE 23, 2021

Give a Nonprofit a Hug Today!

Even those of us who make our livings working with nonprofits may forget what the forest looks like when we spend our time caring for its individual trees. We know our church or school, the local Girl Scout troop, NPR, the homeless shelter, where we take an aging parent for Alzheimer's care, the ACLU and the Sierra Club, Wikipedia. But no matter how many nonprofits you encounter in your day-to-day life—even if, like me, nonprofits are your work as well as your passion—it's a tiny sampling of the sector's breadth and diversity. Today is California Nonprofits Day. I'm a tree-hugger myself, so at the risk of stretching this metaphor beyond recognition, in the spirit of forest bathing, I invite you to take a moment to celebrate the forest.

- › California is blessed with around 92,000 charitable (i.e., exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code) nonprofits. Of these, more than 2/3 are all-volunteer; many more with a paid staff use significant volunteer help in their operations. Nonprofits organize the armies of volunteers, large and small, who build and maintain our communities.
- › In addition to volunteers, one in every 14 California jobs is at a nonprofit—that's more employees than the California construction industry.
- › California nonprofits are major players in our state's economy, bringing more than \$40 billion each year into California from out-of-state, through obtaining federal funds for in-state services, grants from out-of-state foundations, and individual donations.
- › California nonprofits are the backbone of essential services delivery. For example, they help 19 million individuals with disabilities each year, and provide 32% of California's Medi-Cal services.
- › It is sometimes said that California leads the nation in innovation, and nonprofits are California's engine for social innovation. Peter Drucker, one of the most widely-known and influential thinkers on modern business corporation management, once said, "Every important idea for social change in the last 100 years has come from the nonprofit sector." California nonprofits have been innovative leaders in environmental protection, in rights for people with disabilities, in the LGBTQ movement, in Black Lives Matter, in anti-toxics legislation, in museum design, and in ethnic theater, to name a few.

Every year since 2016, the California legislature—working with the [California Association of Nonprofits](#)—invites its members to honor a "Nonprofit of the Year" from their districts. Nearly all 120 members do so. Legislators already know and work with many of their local nonprofits, but California Nonprofits Day gives them a chance to see the breadth and depth of the nonprofit community across the state. This year, instead of

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Nonprofit Law Matters looks at legal issues in the nonprofit and tax-exempt organizations world. Written by the attorneys and paralegals of Adler & Colvin, it provides updates and analysis regarding philanthropy, charity, and other exempt organization issues.

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a joyous in-person celebration in Sacramento, Nonprofits of the Year will celebrate virtually with their individual legislators.

Forest bathing is supposed to refresh the spirit in a real forest, but I hope you'll take a minute today to appreciate the beauty, the complex ecosystem, and the importance of the nonprofit forest, and refresh your spirit by thinking about how nonprofits have made your life better. And go hug a tree—I mean a nonprofit.

Data on individuals with disabilities served: <https://data.chhs.ca.gov/dataset/consumers-served-by-residence-type-and-regional-center/resource/b5ba45bc-2d8f-4af2-a88a-aa73a8acec8c>

All other data from Causes Count: The Economic Power of California's Nonprofit Sector. San Francisco: California Association of Nonprofits, 2019.