

# From the Quickstart to the Circle: How two friends built community and impact in Washington, DC

With training from the Giving Circle Quickstart, Becca Flyer and Lauren Gross teamed up, gathered their friends, and donated \$1,757.

**Author: Lauren Gross, with input from Becca Flyer**

About a year ago, I first heard the term giving circle. I loved the concept: a group of intentional, caring people coming together to pool their resources to give with greater impact. Once I became the program manager for [Growfund for Giving Circles](#), a no-minimum donor-advised fund (DAF) that supports collective grantmaking, I was excited about the opportunity to take my passions for philanthropy and community-building, and apply them to my career. The challenge was - I had never created a giving circle of my own. I was surrounded by inspiring people who bring together dozens, if not hundreds, of people to have an impact on a variety of causes, yet I still wasn't sure where to start, myself.

Then, one afternoon, Becca Flyer, my friend and fellow [JDC Entwine](#) DC Community Representative, approached me and suggested we start our own giving circle. She had participated in Amplifier's [Giving Circle Quickstart](#), so she would get three coaching sessions with the Amplifier team that we could use towards starting our circle. I was sold.

We decided to focus on young Jewish women in the DC-area, since we knew other women who were looking to connect in a meaningful way. Over the next few weeks, Becca and I recruited members from our respective Jewish worlds - [JDC Entwine](#), [Amplifier](#), [KAHAL](#), [Schusterman](#), [BBYO](#), and [Jewish Women International](#). We had hoped that 6 or 7 people would join, so were ecstatic when we learned that 14 amazing women were willing to commit 2 hours per week for a period of three weeks (which is generally unheard of in DC!). **Many of these incredible women have full-time jobs, extracurriculars, and are raising families, so taking time for themselves—to evaluate their values, core beliefs, and the causes they care about most—was a much-needed luxury that the group indulged in.**

Here's what we did at each of our 3 weekly meetings:



1. We launched our giving circle during the [Jewish High Holidays](#) since it was an opportunity for reflection and rebirth. Our first meeting began by connecting, because most women in the room did not know each other. We chatted about motherhood, recent moves, and the yummy challah that Becca had made. From there, we mapped our individual and shared values, guided by Amplifier's values worksheet and the [Rose Community Foundation](#)'s Jewish Philanthropic Value Cards. A long and thoughtful discussion ensued. Eventually, we landed on 5 core values.
2. With our group values solidified, we launched into issue areas in meeting #2. We used Amplifier's [Grant Focus Area worksheet](#) to guide us through three hours of deeply meaningful discussion. Ultimately, we decided to focus on organizations supporting migrant children on the national level.
3. Finally, to celebrate our third and final session, one of our wonderful giving circle members offered to host a potluck celebration at her home. During this meeting, we deliberated between various organizations and, after about two hours of discussion, we placed our votes!

In the end, we allocated \$1,757 grant dollars to two organizations:

- \$588 (about  $\frac{1}{3}$  of funds) to [KIND \(Kids in Need of Defense\)](#), which strives to ensure that no child appears in immigration court without high quality legal representation.
- \$1,169 (about  $\frac{2}{3}$  of funds) to [Angry Tias and Abuelas](#), a grassroots organization focused on providing necessities and support to asylum-seekers our borders and as they embark on their journeys to designated destinations in the US.

**We ended the night feeling satisfied with our decision and energized by the opportunity to support such important causes.**

For both Becca and myself—and we believe for many other women in the group—this experience will have a lasting effect. Not only has it allowed us the chance to raise funds for important causes, it has also helped us build a new community of bright, generous, and kind women from whom we can learn from and grow.