

Inspiration BOARD



EchoAge founders Alison Smith (left) and Debbie Zinman know how to have a blast *and* give back.



In May, Alison's daughter Jacqui had a 10th birthday party (here and below) that raised funds for a Toronto hospital.



Another b-day girl, Jamie, helped kids with cancer.



Party with a purpose!

Meet 2 moms who are turning kiddie celebrations into fund-raisers for those in need. Plus: 4 ways you can put a **charitable** spin on *any* shindig.

After dropping off their kids at one over-the-top birthday party too many, Toronto moms Debbie Zinman and Alison Smith said, "Enough." They'd had it with seeing the piles and piles of presents kids would barely touch and that were destined to be lost, forgotten, or regifted. "Most parents would show up with a gift they had just run out to buy for \$20, and they had no idea if the child already had the toy or even wanted it," Debbie says. "Alison and I wondered, *How can this money be better spent?*" Their answer is echoage.com, a website where parents can create free party invitations and pick from one of more than 100 nonprofits to support, including the World Wildlife Fund and Reading Is Fundamental. When guests R.S.V.P., they can make a donation—half goes to the charity, and the rest goes to the parents to buy one meaningful gift, like a musical instrument or an art set, that their child has picked. "Children are naturally giving little souls, and we wanted to couple the joy of getting a present with helping others who are less fortunate," says Alison. Lorri Sklar of Orlando, FL, recently used the site to raise \$200 for Autism Speaks and give her 4-year-old daughter a dollhouse she really wanted. "It was the perfect way to keep gifting under control while teaching her about sharing," Lorri says. In just four years, EchoAge has funneled more than \$1 million in donations to 25 charities. Get in on the fun at echoage.com.

4 MORE WAYS TO PARTY IT FORWARD

1 Host a clothing swap for Goodwill's Good for Everyone Swap-n-Drop campaign. Ask girlfriends to bring gently worn duds they're willing to trade with guests, then drop off whatever's left at Goodwill (locator.goodwill.org).

2 Register your wedding with the I Do Foundation and ask guests to support the charity of your choice in place of gifts. It's a sweet idea, especially for second marriages, when you've got all the stemware and panini presses you could ever need. For details, visit idofoundation.org.

3 Plant a tree by buying your party invites from Paper Culture, an eco-chic stationery company. Enter the promo code REDBOOK at checkout on paperculture.com from July 10 to August 14 and they'll donate the cost of your entire purchase to the Arbor Day Foundation, which plants more than 10 million trees in the United States each year.

4 Mark your calendar to join Share Our Strength's Dine Out for No Kid Hungry campaign from September 16 to 22. Get some friends together, then go to dineout.nokidhungry.org/maps to find a restaurant that is giving a chunk of its sales that week to the nonprofit, which helps fund nutrition programs for kids in low-income families. —ASHLEY NIEDRINGHAUS