



SAMPLE

VIRTUAL REALITY **Susan Tenby**

Susan Tenby, 36, is the first non-profit organizer in the virtual, 3-D world of Second Life. Her avatar, or digital "self," is a svelte pink cat with pointy ears and whiskers named Glitteractica Cookie (far right)—reminiscent of the Japanese *anime* and *manga* comic books that Tenby read as a child growing up in Hawaii. But "Glitter" isn't Tenby's first creative foray into the rapidly expanding virtual world. A few years after she helped to launch **TechSoup.org** in 2000 as a one-stop online technology resource for traditional nonprofits, Second Life's parent company asked Tenby to join a focus group to help it build the virtual community. "I immediately saw the potential of it," Tenby recalls. "It was more of a platform than a game." A cancer survivor, Tenby wanted to focus her life on making a difference, so she dispatched her avatar to organize nonprofits in the virtual world—and then sought out a virtual philanthrop to donate virtual office space to keep the momentum going. Enter "in-world" real estate tycoon Anshe Chung (near right), an avatar and Second Life's wealthiest entrepreneur. Earlier this year, Chung's creator, Chinese-born Ailin Graef (below, right), donated 16 acres of pricey virtual space worth roughly \$5,000 in the real world to the effort. Tenby's Nonprofit Commons is now "home" to 32 charities, from CARE USA to America's Second Harvest. —JANET RAE-DUPREE

ONLINE AUCTIONS **Charles Best**

DonorsChoose.org matches donors directly to need—no nonprofit middlemen or experts required. Teachers post their wishlists for supplies, projects, and field trips; donors troll the listings, and when they find something inspiring, they donate a sum of their choosing with a few quick clicks of a mouse. Best, 29, dreamt it up seven years ago, while teaching at a public school in the Bronx, where he shared his colleagues' frustration over chronic underfunding for even basic learning tools. Since then, DonorsChoose has grown exponentially, raising \$13.5 million to fund more than 29,000 projects in eight states [plus four additional cities]. In September 2007, every public school in the country became eligible for support through DonorsChoose. While some compare DonorsChoose to a kind of philanthropic eBay—matching, say, a Manhattan millionaire with a public school teacher in South Central LA—Best says Wikipedia is an equally apt comparison. "In the same way that nobody thought an encyclopedia could be produced by laymen," he says, "we've had a democratizing effect. Donors become their own program officers." This rise of the "citizen philanthropist" hasn't made everyone happy. "Some foundation executives have reacted a bit territorially," says Best, and at least one big-city principal threatened to fire a teacher who posted a request for money to buy dictionaries because he was embarrassed that kids in his school didn't have them already. Best, though, is forging ahead. He's already planning to apply the same model to other causes—and other countries. —MATTHEW MCCANN FENTON



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