

## American Standard Products Help Reenergize New Office Space for DonorsChoose.org

When [DonorsChoose.org](http://DonorsChoose.org), an innovative online charity that supports public schools, outgrew its drab, cramped office in Manhattan, it longed for a new space that would truly reflect the passion and energy of everyone at the organization, boost morale, and facilitate increased interaction. Yet building out and furnishing the new 10,000-sq.-ft. space on West 37<sup>th</sup> Street could have been a costly undertaking for the non-profit.



DonorsChoose.org employees and volunteers are thrilled with their bright new office that includes contributions from American Standard Brands. They easily collaborate in the open spaces or share lunch in the cheery kitchen. Plus, they no longer have to stand in line to use the bathroom!

Enter the architectural firm [Eight Inc.](http://Eight Inc.), designers of the Apple Store, as well as a host of generous companies including [American Standard Brands](http://American Standard Brands), who made the dream come true through donations, discounts and pro-bono consulting. Today the 65 full-time DonorsChoose.org staff plus 176 interns and volunteers enjoy a fresh, fun work environment where they are happy to come to work, collaborate in the new kitchen, and no longer wait in line to use the bathroom!

- more -

“We have grown 41 percent in donations year over year, and seven percent in staff,” said COO César Bocanegra, whose organization crowd funds classroom projects posted on its site by public school teachers nationwide.

Founded by a Bronx public school teacher in 2000, DonorsChoose.org has raised over \$245 million to provide books, technology, classroom supplies, field trips and other materials to more than 11 million public school children.



American Standard [Champion PRO toilets](#) in the new DonorsChoose.org office were specified by the renowned design firm Eight Inc. for their combination of good looks, high efficiency and accessibility. The 16 ½ inch Right Height toilets donated by American Standard use only 1.28 gallons of water per flush.

DonorsChoose.org engages the public in public schools by giving people a simple, accountable and personal way to address educational inequity. It envisions a nation where children in every community have the tools and experiences needed for an excellent education.

“When we heard about the mission, we were on board,” said Karina Benloucif, junior designer at Eight Inc. “Our biggest goal was to give them a work environment representing *their* goals,” recalled Benloucif. “Everyone who works there is energized and excited and we wanted an environment that also excited and energized, and reflected their passion. And wanted to provide a delightful experience when board members, donors and other visitors came to the offices.”

DonorsChoose.org is much like a tech company, using digital tools in innovative ways. In fact, TV host and philanthropic rock star Oprah has called it “a revolutionary charity.”

“For that reason, we wanted to have a forward-thinking tech startup feel, but yet not too modern and isolating,” Benloucif explained. “So we leveraged the nostalgia of school years past, the things we remember as children. We chose iconic schoolhouse forms and reinterpreted them for the modern office.”

- more -

Hence, the bright storage cubbies, locker-lined hallways, blackboards, wall art reminiscent of old-fashioned world globes and microscopes, and hopscotch games stenciled on the floors. The materials are neutral, untreated pine and unfinished metal. The bright pops of colors — orange, yellow, green, blue and red — are cheerful yet modern and sophisticated. “It was a fun project, balancing those two sides,” added Benloucif.

And how has the DonorsChoose.org staff reacted? “Literally there is a night and day difference,” Bocanegra noted. “It was so dark in the old office, the staff couldn’t stay in there for too long. A lot of people were working from home because they didn’t enjoy the office environment. Now that it’s so bright and cheerful, people who would only stay until 5 work until 7 or 8. They feel comfortable here, there’s still a lot of light in the office.”



Sleek and modern, the American Standard undermount [Prevoir single-bowl sink in stainless steel](#) is the centerpiece of the friendly kitchen in the new office of the charity DonorsChoose.org.

The old layout was very disconnected, sort of a donut shape that blocked teams from collaborating. That’s all changed with the new plan. And just like at home, the new kitchen, larger and more open, has become a gathering space. Employees now eat lunch together in the common area, rather than isolated at their desks. Later in the day, around 5 or 6 pm, they congregate there, too. Adding a bit of sparkle to this refreshed kitchen area is the American Standard undermount [Prevoir single-bowl sink in stainless steel](#) – sleek and modern, durable and complementary to room highlights.

- more -

Besides the kitchen sink, American Standard donated the restroom toilets, urinal and sinks to enhance the DonorsChoose.org environment, while providing water saving product performance.



Because longevity was a major design consideration, both the women's and men's bathrooms in the new DonorsChoose.org office are equipped with durable ADA-compliant American Standard [Declyn wall-hung lavatories](#).

"As architects and designers, we were very familiar with American Standard. A lot of people here in the firm had used them," said Benloucif, explaining why they approached the company. "We knew they offered great fixtures at reasonable prices, and we thought they were the kind of company that would be excited by the mission. It's so nice when you work with a company you can depend upon for these attributes."

"We were thrilled to donate plumbing products to DonorsChoose.org to help upgrade their facilities. It feels great knowing our small contribution can inspire their team to even greater heights during their work day," said Jay Gould, president and CEO of American Standard Brands. "We're also proud that the reputation we've established for quality, reliability and fair pricing influenced such an esteemed design firm as Eight Inc. to invite us to participate in this project."

American Standard's reputation for durability was an important factor in its selection, too. "Built-in longevity was a huge design requirement on this project," Benloucif explained.

"We had to look to the future to accommodate a 50 percent growth in staff, to about 140 or 150," added Bocanegra.

Just going from three bathrooms to four, with more stalls and urinals, has made the staff's workday more pleasant. "There always used to be a line at our old place, but no longer," said the COO. "Everyone appreciates the greater availability."

- more -

To outfit the bathroom space in keeping with the organization's nostalgic and iconic design choices, the classically styled [American Standard Champion PRO](#) high efficiency toilets (HETs) were selected, in a comfortable 16 1/2 inch Right Height that is accessible for all mobility levels. These HETs are engineered to be virtually clog-free, while using a water conserving 1.28 gallons of water per flush (gpf) – this makes them WaterSense-certified for using 20 percent less water than traditional toilets.



Both the American Standard [Lynbrook urinal](#) and [Champion PRO high efficiency toilet](#) provide DonorsChoose.org with water saving, reliable performance, factors impacting their selection for this office remodel by design firm Eight Inc.

The men's restroom was equipped with a low consumption [American Standard Lynbrook 1.0 gpf urinal](#) that includes a flushing rim and blowout flush action for optimum effectiveness. Both the women's and men's bathrooms now feature durable [American Standard Declyn wall-hung lavatories](#) that are ADA-compliant.

DonorsChoose.org appreciated American Standard's fast service during the build out. "Our general contractor had selected some models that ended up not being compatible with the

building system, and American Standard got the replacements there right away. They were absolutely wonderful to work with," Bocanegra noted.

In turn, DonorsChoose.org is getting the word out about American Standard to its 160,000+ Twitter followers and 150,000+ friends on Facebook. And there's a [great shout-out on its blog](#). "We've gotten a lot of comments and likes," reported Janelle Lin, vice president, partnership and business development for DonorsChoose.org.

So despite what we learned in arithmetic class, one plus one *can* add up to a lot more than two, under the right circumstances and with the support of companies that believe in the mission of helping all children receive educational excellence.

###

Champion<sup>®</sup>, Prevoir<sup>®</sup>, Lynbrook<sup>®</sup> and Right Height<sup>®</sup> are registered trademarks of American Standard Brands.

Declyn<sup>™</sup> is a trademark of American Standard Brands.

WaterSense<sup>®</sup> is a registered trademark of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).