



This month's Inkling is a Special Festivus Edition.

If you're unfamiliar, **Festivus** is a fictional holiday from Seinfeld that rejects the commercial and sentimental trappings of December in favor of something simpler: telling the truth, airing grievances, and skipping the nonsense.

The episode that introduced Festivus is called "The Strike," weaving together multiple, seemingly unrelated storylines: Elaine's determination to earn a free sub after 23 bad ones, Kramer's years-long bagel strike, George's invention of the charity The Human Fund, and Frank Costanza's Festivus holiday built entirely around complaining, fighting, and disdain for tinsel.

Separate threads held together by stubborn persistence. If that's not the nonprofit sector, we don't know what is.

In this issue: a few things we're all pretending are fine, a Human Fund that's actually real, and the annual airing of grievances.

things nonprofits pretend are fine (they're not)

"We'll figure out the capacity later." Later has arrived. It is still not figured out.

One-time money being treated like long-term infrastructure. It's not going to last, what's the plan?

Reporting requirements no one actually uses. The spreadsheet exists. What are you going to DO with it?

"Partnerships" with no decision-making power. Meetings were held. Nothing changed.

Strategic plans with no contingency for when things go sideways. Things will go sideways.

Board members who "just need to be engaged differently." They've been engaged differently for three years. They are not engaged.

"Lean" staff treated as a permanent condition. That was supposed to be temporary. It's been four years.

The exit interview no one wants to read too closely. Patterns are emerging. Patterns are being ignored.

Sound familiar?

let's talk about it



the human fund (but real this time)

George Costanza invented the Human Fund to get out of buying real gifts. This is the opposite.

Here are a few local organizations doing work we believe in. Support can look like donations, memberships, volunteering, supplies, or maybe adopting a new four-legged family member.

Local news: [Virginia Local News Project](#) • [Alexandria Times](#)

Environment, conservation, and animal welfare: [Wild Virginia](#) • [Virginia Conservation Network](#) • [Richmond Animal Care and Control](#) • [Goochland Community Cats](#)

Youth, wellness & belonging: [Enchanting Bookmobile](#) • [MH Boxes](#) • [Richmond Volleyball Club Robison Scholarship Fund](#)

Community support, food access & safety: [CAPUP \(Capital Area Partnership Uplifting People\)](#) • [CCHASM \(Connecting Communities to Hope, Access, Support, & Meals\)](#) • [LIVE \(Latinos in Virginia Empowerment Center\)](#)

AND **nominate your favorite nonprofit for a chance to win \$10,000** of free support from your very own Blue Octopus Consulting!

a gift from us

Missed our webinar on creating safe environments for youth with disabilities?

catch the recording here

Use password .H4X&H4^

Viewing the webinar is a prerequisite for our **FREE January 14 mini-conference** at Wintergreen Adaptive Sports, where youth-serving organizations will roll up their sleeves, work through real-world scenarios, and learn directly from the Virginia Department of Health and partners about strengthening prevention and safety practices.

save your seat



the airing of grievances

In the spirit of Festivus, a few members of the Blue Octopus team shared a grievance or two. Some were brief. Some were... more expansive.

Shelley: Traffic. Specifically, all of it, always, everywhere.

Carter: Streaming service nonsense. We are breaking out the DVD player. Libraries are the new Blockbuster.

Quillin: Chia seeds lodged in your teeth as punishment for trying to eat a healthy breakfast.

Laura: Overly bright headlights, People who cruise in the left lane even after you cut them off dramatically, Christmas music, Fruitcake, The Muppets, Lukewarm coffee, Spam calls, Spam emails, Poodles, Hoarding wealth, Celery...

The airing of grievances is now complete.

p.s. only one week left!



No tinsel, just \$10,000 in pro bono strategic support for a nonprofit making things happen in Virginia. Tell us who needs a boost!

nominate a nonprofit

From our corner of the chaos to yours, happy Festivus, or whatever you're celebrating this month. See you in 2026.

