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Graphic designer leaves mark on charity

BY KATHLEEN NORRIS | COURIER CONTRIBUTOR

Fred Martens is working hard to create the kind of world in which he wants to live.

"Folks need to just get over themselves, and do something for others," he said. "I know that's jargon, but I have friends who are unhappy with this or that – and if they would just help someone else, they'd see how relatively lucky they are."

Martens is principal of Martens' Art, a firm that offers graphic design in the print, Web and advertising arenas.

In business for more than 20 years, he has a substantial client list, plus an extensive résumé of community activities.

He's designer of first resort for a range of local charities, including Caracole, Queen City Careers Association, Cincinnati Metropolitan Orchestra and the Queen City Rainbow Band.

"The groups I volunteer for tend to be ones I already have a connection with," he said. "I may know folks on the committee, or a business associate recommends me."



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Trained as a classical musician, Martens puts the Rainbow Band at the top of his current activities list. The all-amateur band, formed in 2001, has become a popular addition to local parades and festivals.

"I never thought I'd be in a band," he said, "much less one that marches. But this band's true strength is in its diversity.

"People think of diversity as primarily racial, but that's just the tip of the iceberg in my opinion," Martens said. "Socioeconomic differences, gender differences and gender expression are much more of a challenge currently. The Rainbow Band does a great job of having a real mix of people working together."

If everyone wants you to help, it

becomes very important to know how to say no. Martens has that covered.

"The trick is to do it quickly," he said. "If I can't do a job – paying or volunteer – I let the client know ASAP and try to recommend someone else."

But requests keep coming.

"Working with Fred on any project is a treat," community leader Janet Ach said. "His creativity and talents are never-ending, plus he will always make you smile."

"I have an odd zen about how I allocate my time," Martens said. "I just do the best I can, and stay with a project as long as I enjoy it or I feel my contribution is really helping."

"Somehow things seem to work out," he said. "Plus I work a lot of weekends."