

Businesses That Give, Reap Rewards

By Sue Marceau

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The word “g-i-v-e” often spells more for the overall awareness of a business than any marketing or employee team-building program ever imagined by a company visionary.

“It gets the company name out in the community for the good that they do,” said Carol Chamberlain, regional manager of the Yavapai County Community Foundation (YCCF), an affiliate of the Arizona Community Foundation (ACF). “What they get most is a sense of corporate camaraderie unsurpassable with what it does for the team spirit within a company.”

There are many ways to give back to the community using individual or collective time, treasure and talent, as evidenced by the projects in which local firms are engaged. Whatever the route chosen – money, discounted products or services, fundraising events, in-kind donations, or contributing to an endowment organization such as YCCF – the benefits to both donor and non-profit can be compelling.

Sixty-one charitable funds have been created by local businesses and residents through cash, real estate, marketable securities and other assets under the YCCF umbrella, according to Tracey McConnell, the foundation’s grants & operations coordinator. Professionally managed through the ACF, the funds are pooled statewide for economies of scale. Since 1993, YCCF has awarded more than \$7.6 million in grants and scholarships throughout Yavapai County.

Philanthropy drives business, inspires customer loyalty and encourages employees to work together, McConnell said: “It’s camaraderie across the organization that you can feel. It’s palpable and that’s believable to me and calls me back as a customer.”

McConnell likened the process to planting roots: “What we are talking about here goes deep. The deeper the roots, the bigger the tree. It’s relationship-based, trust-based and very productive in terms of marketing. Companies get the biggest return on their investment in



Sir Speedy Printing and Marketing designers Heidi Landry and Robin Golden select colors for the company’s latest non-profit printing job.

Photo By Sue Marceau

terms of outreach and involvement. It’s the least expensive marketing with the greatest return.”

Businesses said they have launched philanthropy efforts for reasons ranging from a desire to give back to a feeling of responsibility for helping the communities they serve and whose citizens positively impact their bottom line. Philanthropists patronize other firms that partner with them on their donation programs. They also encourage other businesses to start their own charitable giving.

“To promote making a difference in the community” was the inspiration behind Fann Contracting’s Employees Making a Difference (FEMAD) in 2006. Forty-one employees now contribute to FEMAD, supporting seven non-profits through weekly or one-time payroll deduction, according to Kerri Vaughn, the company’s charitable donation administrator. Employees can choose one charity or multiples among a list determined each year by the company’s charitable contributions committee. The company matches plan

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donations dollar for dollar and FEMAD has raised \$300,886 since the program began, Vaughn said. She noted that Fann is eager to share its process with other companies wanting to implement a similar program.

“Charitable giving pays back in so many ways,” said Ed Pattermann, owner of Windermere Real Estate Northern Arizona. “Not only helping your community and your own self-esteem, but it develops a tighter bond with people in the community in business relationships.”

Chamberlain explained that “it’s not what you ask for. It’s who asks who. Giving is to people. It’s not to causes. If you get people enthused about something, they want to participate. It’s my asking you. You are going to join that effort.”

Employers like to host or participate in events because they have employees “who want to become involved in the community,” she said. “They want a stake in it, a presence.”

Windermere’s efforts include an annual charity golf tournament in May, a community service day in October, agent contributions of a percentage of each property sale to the Windermere Foundation, and emerging needs throughout the year. Funding to local charities assisting families and children has totaled about \$100,000 over the past 12 years, Pattermann said, with about \$38,000 each this year and last.

The Windermere Foundation Charity Challenge this spring celebrated the foundation’s quarter century of service with a Facebook contest awarding \$25,000 in each of five regions to a charity receiving the most online votes. Yavapai Casa for Kids, nominated by the local Windermere offices, won by more than 1,000 votes in the region including Arizona, Nevada and Utah.

Ken Coleman, owner of Sir Speedy Printing and Marketing Services, said he likes to help with a discount on jobs for

non-profits. The firm’s annual contributions amount to “somewhere between \$15,000 to \$20,000 a year,” he said. “You try to do what you can” for the many organizations seeking support during a given year.

“We have no specific dollar amount we budget each year,” Coleman noted. “We do not operate that way. We try to be flexible as we go through the year. We know how business is trending over the year. That’s the way I like to operate, to help out as many as I can...I like to spread it out and do a lot more smaller ones.”

There are so many ways that people can get involved in giving, Chamberlain said, starting with “making a selection of what you want to support. The exercise itself brings people inside the community. Peers get together and do something. Just the conversation will spur ideas.”

Competitive spirit emerges and “sparks the entire team to do something together for a common purpose,” she continued. “You involve so many people in your circle. I would ask the mailman to sponsor me when (he was) delivering the mail, my dry cleaner to give me a coupon. It’s like a ripple effect. You throw in a stone and it just grows.”

“This is a very generous community (with) very kind hearted people,” Pattermann said. “So much goes unseen and unknown about how much businesses give. We try to make sure to do our part. The opportunities are there, everywhere. There are so many people in need...”

Businesses will be rewarded through a giving philosophy, Coleman predicted, urging that they “adopt whatever level (of funding) they can and set (it) aside...It’s like people tithing to their church...Here is the amount I can do to help out the local non-profits...Some organization will really appreciate it. It’s going to make somebody’s day.”

