

Giving Back A Win-Win For Organizations And The Communities They Serve

A volunteer for the Education and Assistance Corporation recently shared an experience of shopping with a 12-year-old girl at Wal-Mart during the holidays to help her select Christmas gifts with funds donated by EAC. This young girl was living in a shelter at the time. She wasn't shopping for the latest fashion or a game; what she wanted most was a pillow for her bed. Tears came to my eyes as I heard this story, and I was reminded of how many people in our own area — among the wealthiest in the nation — are in so much need. I also thought about how organizations on Long Island give generously to help many of these individuals.

"Every firm has an obligation to give back to the community in which it conducts business and we live in" says Mindy Ferrentino Wolfle, Long Island Regional Marketing Manager of the law firm Nixon Peabody LLP. This sentiment is echoed by Linda Army, AVP, Business Development for Bethpage Federal Credit Union. "We think it is important to be a good corporate citizen. Doing so not only helps the community, but also helps to build brand recognition."

BFCU gives to the community in several ways. Their Charitable Giving Program benefits numerous Long Island organizations such as EAC, the Society for Human Resource Management and the Coalition Against Child Abuse and Neglect, as well as Long Island chapters of larger organizations. BFCU also partners with Newsday to sponsor Community Champions, which highlights 52 charities a year with full page write-ups in the Sunday LI Life section of Newsday. They also have a Community Events program to sponsor functions such as the Air Show at Jones Beach, the Long Island Fall Festival in Huntington, the Nassau



County Fair and the Long Island Ducks. BFCU is a Long Island based not-for-profit organization, so benefits are returned to members.

As part of Ferrentino Wolfle's role, she along with the firm's managing part-

Stop & Shop Supermarket Co. public affairs director Faith Weiner, with a group of Marines who were honored by the supermarket company through its Flight of Aces program.

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ner, Michael Taubin, and the office administrator, Patricia Dooley, helps select how the firm should divide the funds available for community relations among the many deserving organizations in the area. The firm fosters a culture of giving. Staff at Nixon Peabody actively participate

in a variety of worthwhile causes, such as food and clothing drives for the Interfaith Nutrition Network, organizing teams for the MS Walk, volunteering for the LI Fund for Women and Girls, and providing holiday gifts for children at Cabrini Immigration Services. Nixon Peabody has partnered with the Literacy Volunteers of Nassau County to set up and lead a "Lawyers for Literacy" program for 2005 and encourage other law firms to participate. Attorneys are also encouraged to provide pro-bono legal services.

Stop & Shop Supermarket Co. is also involved in a number of charitable programs that reflect the uniqueness of the neighborhoods they serve. For example, to recognize Long Island veterans and tens of thousands of local defense industry retirees, they created a congressionally-recognized Flight of Aces program that allows these individuals to fly in vintage World War II

aircraft with their families as a means of creating intergenerational experiences that recognize the "heroes in our own homes."

Stop & Shop also supports hunger relief through programs such as Food for Friends, in which 60 percent of funds raised benefit a local food pantry selected by each store. The other 40 percent benefit regional food banks. Through its 36 stores in Nassau and Suffolk counties, individual store managers also select organizations to sponsor through such things as donations of food or bottles of water for charity walks and runs, as well as child and education programs, among others. The company highlights numerous company-wide programs geared toward children and have raised millions of dollars for causes such as pediatric cancer research through its Triple Winners program, as well as for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Fund.

Community relations efforts may also include serving on non-profit boards and committees. One of the attorneys at Nixon Peabody serves on the Business Advisory Board for Literacy Volunteers. Perez is a board member of numerous organizations, such as Long Island Cares, United Way of Long Island, and the Long Island Center for Business & Professional Women, among others. She also serves on advisory boards, such as Nassau County's Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

While organizations benefit from brand recognition and positive public relations, our community also benefits as do the employees who feel pride in working for a company that wants to make a difference. With the holiday season behind us, it is important to keep our focus on the many needs of the community throughout the year. If you are interested in making a difference — volunteer through your company to participate in or organize a fund-raising event or contact one of the many local charitable organizations to find out how you can contribute your time, talents, products or funds to help others. ♦

— DIANA RIVENBURGH