

Many companies are doing more than writing out checks to charity, they are. . .



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Bob Hutchinson, regional director for Century 21, has helped raise over \$1 million for the Easter Seal Society with Volleyball Tournaments, The Boston Marathon and other corporate sponsored events.

Turning Corporate Giving Into An Event

Your company is besieged by requests from non-profit organizations looking for contributions. Your first thought might be that you just tell everyone no — to go away.

Corporations, large and small, do make donations of services, merchandise, or cash grants to organizations they feel are making worthwhile efforts in the community.

Some corporations spend some of their contribution dollars making community investments while at the same time obtaining high profile, goodwill visibility. These companies often underwrite "special events" that raise more for the non-profit than any com-

pany could give them in a grant.

The Century 21 Real Estate chain is the number one "National Corporate Sponsor" for the Easter Seal Society, according to Robert Hutchinson, the Burlington-based regional director for Century 21.

Century 21 sponsors a volleyball tournament for the society in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine. Over the past seven to eight years, Century 21 has raised over \$1 million for the organization.

The money is raised in a number of ways. The corporation does make a donation. However, the bulk is raised through participants in the Volleyball Tournament and

by Matt LaBarre



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through other corporate-sponsored local events.

"Brokers give a percentage of the money through their brokers' council," Hutchinson explains. "Beyond the underwriting support for the volleyball tournament, individual brokers then run fundraisers such as bowlathons, dances, and bake sales."

Hutchinson raised \$6,000 himself through pledges for running the Boston Marathon.

"We as a corporation selected the Easter Seal Society eight years ago when we were looking for a national organization to work with," Hutchinson says, explaining Century 21 was looking for an organization that was widely recognized and fit well with the firm's goal of helping a cross section of people. The Easter Seal Society fit the bill.

Hutchinson, who is now vice-chairman of the Massachusetts Easter Seal board of directors, explains that contributing to these fundraising efforts is part of what Century 21 is about as an organization.

"Easter Seals handles much of the marketing and our agency works hard to get radio stations to commit to run public service announcements," Hutchinson continues. "Most stations have been very good about helping us."

Sponsoring the Easter Seal events has clearly benefited Century 21. "Working together to raise funds for Easter Seals creates a great synergy, a sense of being part of the team. And team building is an essential part of Century 21" Hutchinson explains.

Brokers are viewed as more than real estate people. They're seen as individuals.

The involvement with Easter Seals is a good form of networking, leading to business and non-business relationships that expand the broker's business and social circles.

"Nationally, we receive great recognition, which humanizes our business," Hutchinson concludes.

Honeywell, based in Waltham, sponsors a different style program in both scope and direction than Century 21, according to Joan Duff, manager, community education.

The company sponsors a road race for developmentally handicapped young people.

"Our road race is not really a fundraising event as much as it is an attempt to draw attention to people with special needs and their ability to compete in many forums," Duff explains. "We try to acquaint people with the program and allow them to see these people, which include teams of blind individuals and cardiac rehabilitation teams, compete recreationally, then understand that these people can also compete in the workplace."

Besides the road race, Honeywell distributes cash and equipment grants. However, great emphasis and support is given to employee activity programs.

Kathy Carney, Honeywell's manager of employee activities programs, explains that sponsorship of events and projects are locally driven by employee committees.



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Honeywell employees have sponsored clothing drives for Goodwill Industries and food collections for Neighbors in Need in Lawrence and the Bread Kitchen in Boston — the Billerica group went to the New England Pediatric Care Hospital to run a Christmas Party — and have sponsored a bingo night at Children's Hospital.

"Our employee groups have sponsored the annual Daffodil Day Fundraiser for the American Cancer Society and a Statue of Liberty Fundraiser," Carney says. "Our Waltham Committee is assisting Boston City Hospital with its new Children with Aids Unit."

"What we try to do is offer our employees opportunities to help others," Carney explains.

A different approach is taken by John Hancock Insurance Co., according to Walter Jennings, manager, community relations and contributions.

The company makes contributions in the form of cash grants and in-kind services. John Hancock does participate in the Blood Brotherhood Blood Drive and is a participant in the United Way Campaign.

This year, however, the company has focused its attention on the Boston Marathon.

"Our public relations department, our entire communications department, and in fact, much of our corporate resources, are focused on the Marathon," Jennings says, ex-

plaining "We have been asked by a number of organizations to underwrite events and we have discouraged this kind of involvement."

Another corporation that has focused on a single event is the Boston Five Cent Savings Bank. Jeanne Boyle, public relations manager, explains that the bank has a major commitment to the Boston 5 Classic, an annual Ladies Professional Golf Association Tournament.

The bank provides office space to the Boston 5 Classic Foundation, which exists as a separate entity. The Classic raised \$80,000 for the Massachusetts Special Olympics last year. The foundation hopes to raise \$100,000 for Special Olympics this year.

"The Classic really exists by itself," Boyle explains. "We underwrite a portion of it and the foundation raises money from other corporate sponsorships as well."

The bank's investment in the tournament is not viewed as a corporate contribution, but a form of sports marketing, which Boyle believes is a growing part of many corporations' public relations programming.

Corporate sports marketing events, and not necessarily just for non-profit groups, is the "wave of the future" in marketing innovations, says Boyle. These events, which can benefit a charitable event in some instances, also gain recognition for a company. "They will become a major and significant part of promotional budgets for many companies," says Boyle.

In the past couple of years, the Framingham based *Middlesex News* has become more aggressive in developing sponsorship/contribution programs.

Jill Baker, promotions manager for the *Middlesex News* explains that its programs and the accompanying budgets are split between contributions and promotions.

"We try to sponsor or underwrite programs in the entire 30 town MetroWest area we serve," Baker says.

"The *News* really attempts to get involved with many local organizations," she continues. "Our SMILES program for instance is an effort to help agencies throughout those communities."

"We are able to do some things that others cannot by the nature of our business," Baker continues.

The newspaper was very involved in Ashland Day, underwriting the costs of tee-shirts for the road race.

The paper is one of the primary sponsors of the Greater Framingham Red Cross Chapter's annual Red Cross Classic 10 kilometer Road Race and Two Mile Fun Walk for Health," which will be held May 31. The *News* helps underwrite tee-shirts and contributes ad space for the event.

In fact, donating advertising space is a major facet of the newspaper's sponsorship program.

An example is the *Middlesex News* Salvation Army Holiday Fund drive. The paper



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has raised thousands of dollars for needy area residents through this effort, which includes feature stories and editorial support.

The paper has also contributed space and printing to the Metrowest Area Muscular Dystrophy Association Telethon Center in conjunction with the Jerry Lewis Labor Day Telethon Center at Duca's in the Maridor.

Baker estimates that the *News* donates over \$100,000 in cash, space, and merchandise annually. The program is run by the marketing department, which also sponsors a speakers bureau and a subscription program for non-profits.

McDonald's restaurants have been prominent among corporations that actively look for opportunities to sponsor special events. Recently, the company took an innovative step that changes the way McDonald's will run special projects.

From 1979 to 1986, area McDonald's sponsored the Love Run program to benefit the Muscular Dystrophy Association. The event raised over \$150,000 for MDA and garnered publicity for both MDA and McDonald's.

Local McDonald's have historically been receptive to assisting local non-profit organizations.

In the early 1980's the restaurant chain began serious fundraising efforts on behalf of local Ronald McDonald houses, including one in the Boston area, where families stay while family members are undergoing treatment at local hospitals.

Last year, Massachusetts owner-operators sold Ronald McDonald watches in their restaurants and raised \$50,000 for the Massachusetts Special Olympics.

However, in 1986, area owner-operators established a local chapter of the Ronald McDonald Children's Charity, setting up a foundation through which it funnels funds raised by the restaurants to organizations in the form of cash grants. The foundation will focus as grant-giving to agencies that improve children's lives.

Sid Boorstein, owner-operator of McDonald's restaurants in Norwood, Stoughton, Millis, Needham, and Boston's Hyde Park, and president of the local McDonald's Children's Charity, explains that "setting up a foundation gives us increased flexibility, allowing us to help more organizations than we could in the past."

Creating this central grant-giving fund changes the way McDonald's sponsors fundraising events in a significant way. At least on a regional basis, McDonald's will no longer underwrite events like the Love Run.

Instead, local McDonald's restaurants will sponsor fundraising events to raise money for Ronald McDonald's Children's Charity. Boorstein suggests, "By setting up our own charitable non-profit organization, it will be easier for us to raise funds."

"We hope to raise at least \$250,000 per year, which we can then contribute to organizations such as the Ronald McDonald House, Special Olympics, MDA, and others."

McDonald's has always considered community event sponsorship as a key part of its overall marketing efforts. The company spends advertising and public relations dollars to raise money in these programs, including television and radio advertising.

"The late Ray Kroc, founder of McDonald's, also felt that you had to give something back to the communities where you were located," he says.

Zayre Corporation, headquartered in Framingham, is one of the most successful companies in combining sponsorship/fundraising with public relations. Zayre has been able to help a number of national, regional, and local organizations raise tremendous amounts of money underwriting sponsorships which "leverage" funds through project participants.

In the past decade, the corporation has raised over \$1 million nationally for the March of Dimes through its WALK-AMERICA project. Zayre has also underwritten programs, such as the Zayre-Boston Celtic-Easter Seal Basketball Shoot-Out," the Zayre Hop-N-Ing for Easter Seals in Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Vermont, the Mass. Jaycee-Zayre-A-Thon for MDA, and a chainwide I'm BAD for MDA program.

Zayre has a long history of working with non-profits to turn \$1,000 into \$10,000 and \$10,000 into \$100,000. Stanley Berkovitz, vice president of consumer and community affairs, says "Zayre is a very philanthropic company that feels that it is only proper to share with the community that has made us successful."

"Our commitment to corporate social responsibility has been an important part of our past and will continue to be an important part of the Zayre fabric," Berkovitz says. "We are firm believers in helping those in need and believe that every corporation should support the communities that make it successful."

Zayre does have a significant contributions budget and separate foundation with a total budget of \$2,500,000 in 1987. Of that figure, \$250,000 is earmarked to underwriting community efforts, on a variety of scales.

While Zayre has contributed a great deal to underwrite the WALKAMERICA program in all markets, the company is also sponsoring or co-sponsoring events such as the Red Cross Classic in the greater Framingham area with a modest contribution.

Many of these sponsorships result in tremendous publicity for the company, sometimes including tee-shirts, caps, pledge sheet and flyers emblazoned with the Zayre logo.

Large contributions do not make for successful programs, as much as well thought out sponsorships do. While it may take a little time to find the right vehicle, combining contributions, special event sponsorships and public relations can make a great deal of sense for most companies, small and large. □