

The Spirit

Local corporate philanthropists spread cheer year-around in Fort Worth

Although generosity and good works on behalf of those less fortunate than ourselves are year-around concerns, during the holiday season, the do-gooder bells of charitable giving toll louder than usual as annual toy drives, charity events and philanthropic fundraising campaigns pack the calendar. Even in tough economic times, the spirit of brotherly love is strong in Cowtown, and whether it's sending kids to school with canned goods for needy families, attending charity auctions or simply writing a check to a cause near and dear to your heart, the benefits of such efforts are clear.

by elaine rogers

of Giving

Lynn Tharr, vice president of development for United Way of Greater Tarrant County, says: “Traditionally, there’s the individual psychology that this is the season when we’re thankful for what we have, and that often inspires thoughts of wanting to help others too. I’m not sure whether that always translates over to the corporate mindset, but a lot of large companies in Fort Worth give very generously.”

The Association of Fundraising Professionals reports that the last three months of any calendar year are a crucial time for corporate foundations and charitable organizations, with 40 percent of all charities raising from one-third to one-half of their funds in the last quarter of the year, and three of every 10 charities raising 50 percent or more of their contributions during that time. Besides the extra boost that may come from our traditional notions of holiday generosity, Tharr says year-end fund drives make business sense for reasons ranging from end-of-year tax benefits for charitable donations and the implementation of start-of-year payroll deductions for employees making individual pledges of funds.

Like many nonprofits, United Way schedules its annual fundraising campaign from October through December, and Tharr says it’s a “win-win situation” when employees unite for charitable causes because their employers, in turn, maximize those efforts with matching funds. “It’s a big morale-booster when companies get their employees to come together for fund drives, and then when they step up to the plate with matching funds ... it is a real sign of corporate citizenry.”

Fundraising professionals are quick to point out, however, that, both on a personal and corporate level, it’s difficult to measure what types of gifting are more meaningful or important than others—and impractical to try. Businesses have traditionally led the charge in our giving-back-to-the-community campaigns, earmarking funds for cash contributions and even establishing foundations to make disbursements aimed at improving the communities of their employees and clients. But the experts say direct giving is just one piece of the corporate philanthropic puzzle, as companies frequently integrate their resources of time and money in ways that amplify the efforts of individual donors—sponsoring fund drives, encouraging community volunteerism, matching employee donations and even establishing charitable foundations to disperse monies year-around to specially selected causes.

“Giving comes in so many forms,” says Liz Sisk, president of the Greater Fort Worth Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals. “It’s hard to recognize, or even to identify, which organizations or groups might give back more than others, or to attach a higher value to one group’s philanthropic efforts versus another’s ... And although a lot of organizations enjoy the benefits of attaching their names to a good cause and the publicity that comes with that, others are very private about what they do.”

Tracking the activities and characteristics of charitable foundations and grantmakers nationwide, the Foundation Center in New York includes 11 Fort Worth-based corporate foundations in its database, and Grant Domain main-



United Way
Lynn Tharr
vice president of development,
United Way of Greater Tarrant County



Alcon Laboratories Inc.
\$167 million in both cash and
in-kind contributions over the
past four years

Sara Woodward
director of humanitarian and community services,
Alcon Laboratories, Inc.

tains a similar online database of funding sources. However, Sisk offers the insight that the lists of “big donors,” such as the Amon G. Carter Star-Telegram Employees Fund and contribution programs of companies like Quicksilver Resources Inc. and Radioshack Corporation, are just a starting point for any discussion of corporate philanthropy at the local level. Gauging who’s doing most of the giving can be a challenge, she explains, because many private individuals and businesses make charitable donations with little or no fanfare, altruistically employing the famous motto, “giving is its own reward.”

As corporate membership on various charitable boards fluctuate, nonprofit insiders say company commitments to specific grants and nonprofit organizations frequently mirror the changes. “There are different engines that drive the need to be a good corporate citizen,” Sisk adds, “and things change a lot from year to year in terms of donors and leadership within the ranks of various charities. As a result, Tharr says, companies frequently readjust which causes they choose to support. She also notes an ever-increasing “profligation of 501c3 nonprofit agencies,” and adds: “Because there are tremendous needs in our communities, we’re seeing an increased crush of nonprofit organizations that are being created to help meet those needs.”

Nationwide, about one-fourth of grant dollars go toward education, making it a top priority for corporate foundations across the nation. Actions of many Fort Worth philanthropists support that statistic, with gifts ranging from **Encana Corporation’s** \$400,000 grant to fund an expansion of North Central Texas College in Bowie, and \$625,000 grants **Chesapeake Energy** contributed in 2007 and 2008 to fund disadvantaged youth scholarships in Fort Worth and Dallas.

Wherever local corporations put their charitable efforts and dollars, it’s clear that a wide variety of Fort Worth businesses are surely walking the walk as well as talking the talk. Here’s a sampling of what you’ll find if you take a look at the giving habits of some of our corporate neighbors:

Alcon Laboratories Inc.

Alcon Laboratories Inc., a manufacturer of ophthalmic surgical products and pharmaceuticals, cites \$167 million in both cash and in-kind contributions over the past four years, with the lion’s share of that represented by The Alcon Foundation’s funding of medical mission work that mirrors a corporate goal of preventing blindness and promoting eye health. With Fort Worth serving as the U.S. hub for the Switzerland company, Alcon also spreads cash contributions to local beneficiaries ranging from the Fort Worth Opera and Casa Manana to Evermond ISD. Also, Alcon’s local employees participated in this year’s Trinity Habitat For Humanity’s “Building on the Dream” campaign.

Sara Woodward, Alcon’s director of humanitarian and community services, explains that Alcon pursues similar direct giving and volunteerism programs in employee communities sprinkled throughout 75 countries, but the company’s emphasis remains on in-kind donations of equipment and support for organizations like ORBIS’ Fly-



Pier 1 Imports Inc. has raised \$28 million on UNICEF's behalf

Greg Humenesky
executive vice president of human resources,
Pier 1 Imports

ing Eye Hospital and other nongovernment organizations aligned with its corporate mission. "We try to give synergistically," Woodward explains, "but the primary goal is to support nongovernment organizations with cash, products and equipment to improve eye care worldwide."

Tough Times

According to the **Urban Institute's Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy**, the nation's foundations have assets tallied at around \$600 billion, with annual grants surpassing the \$40 billion mark. Additional research by the Foundation Center, a leading national authority on philanthropy, notes that, with inflation adjustments, corporate foundation giving has nearly doubled since 1990. This represents a slower rate of donation growth than other foundations; grants from corporate foundations accounted for 10 percent of overall foundation giving in 2007 compared to 17 percent in 1990.

Most company-sponsored foundations maintain relatively small endowments and rely on annual contributions from the company to support their programs. Recent studies show that foundation expenses and spending patterns are typically consistent from year to year. Independent foundations, with mandated payouts based on net assets, are particularly vulnerable to stock market declines and, because volatile economic conditions do affect assets and giving levels, some foundations build their endowments in good economic times in order to maintain somewhat consistent giving levels during lean years.

Pier 1 Imports Inc.

Headquartered in Fort Worth, **Pier 1 Imports Inc.** has a long history of neighborhood philanthropy plus several pet projects. Twenty-three years ago, the company implemented an adopt-a-school program and became the active sponsor of a local campus, E.M. Doggett Elementary School. Employees run a Clothing Closet program for the school in addition to other ongoing educational programs, and this type of local outreach initiative seems a more personal take on Pier 1's large-scale corporate commitment to UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund. Since 1985, the company has raised \$28 million on UNICEF's behalf. Pier 1 also doubles its employee contributions to United Way of Tarrant County—staffers raised \$180,117 in 2007—with a dollar-for-dollar matching program, and in 1991, the company tagged the Susan G. Komen for the Cure breast cancer foundation as another pet project, donating \$5 million to the cause to date and pledging \$250,000 from the proceeds of several specially marked products this past year.

Burlington Northern Santa Fe Corporation

A regular on The Foundation Center's list of Fort



"[Amon Carter] probably set the pace in a lot of ways for the level of giving and support we see today in Fort Worth."

Liz Sisk

president,
FW Metro Chapter of the Association
of Fundraising Professionals

Worth corporate philanthropists, railroad giant **Burlington Northern Santa Fe Corporation** distributes millions of dollars nationwide to communities where its 40,000 employees reside via its corporate giving arm, BNSF Foundation. In 2006, the foundation's largesse topped \$7 million, and media relations spokesperson Jim Rogers says Texas gets a generous piece of that pie, with 3,000 local employees and \$1 million earmarked for local charity grants this year. Upper-level employees frequently serve on local charity boards, he notes, and the company commonly "rounds up" employees to participate in charity events ranging from the Special Olympics to Cowtown Brush-Up. "United Way is a primary focus for us, and we're the second largest contributor to the United Way of Greater Fort Worth," Rogers says, adding that employees contributed \$2 million to the organization this year, and company-matching funds increased that figure by another \$250,000.

A Generous Tradition

Fort Worth historians claim that Cowtown, in the past, has enjoyed more foundation funds per capita than any other community in the nation, thanks to the largesse and generosity of benefactors such as the Sid Richardson Foundation, the Bass Foundation and the Burnett-Tandy Foundation. Amon G. Carter, renowned as a city pioneer, longtime publisher of the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* and large-scale philanthropist, is generally credited with inspiring other wealthy Texans to maintain a hometown focus and follow his lead with their own community contributions. Founded in 1945, the Amon G. Carter Foundation reported charitable gifts totaling \$335 million by 2005, and its corporate arm, the Amon G. Carter Star-telegram Employees Fund, routinely gifts \$1.1 million to local charities each year.

"There's no doubt that Fort Worth corporations are generous and good supporters of large nonprofits, golf tournaments and the arts, and a lot of that points back to Amon Carter," observes Liz Sisk, president of the Greater Fort Worth Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals. "He probably set the pace in a lot of ways for the level of giving and support we see today in Fort Worth."

XTO Energy

Tapped last month as 2008's Outstanding Corporate Philanthropic Organization by the local chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals, **XTO Energy** has a strong record of community support with company-wide fundraising drives, matching gift programs and generous cash donations. Lindsey Dingmore, the company's manager of governmental and regulatory affairs, notes that XTO's charitable giving is large-scale as the company funds and supports hundreds of charities, including local partners ranging from the Chisholm Trail chapter of the American Red Cross, Big



XTO Energy named 2008's Outstanding Corporate Philanthropic Organization

Lindsey Dingmore
manager of governmental and regulatory affairs

Vaughn O. Vennerberg II
executive vice president administration,
XTO Energy

Brothers/Big Sisters, Safe Haven and Tarrant Area Food Bank to the American Diabetes Association, Cystic Fibrosis Foundation and American Cancer Society.

Outlining a philanthropic philosophy that focuses on organizations that address basic human needs, disease prevention, nature preservation and community activities, Dingmore says specific examples range from \$500,000 committed several years ago to the American Red Cross tsunami relief efforts, another \$500,000 devoted to hurricane Katrina relief efforts by the Red Cross and other organizations, and then \$60,000 earmarked in 2008 for additional projects of the Chisholm Trail chapter. "That's pretty typical for us," Dingmore explains. We like to develop relationships with organizations, and then we partner up with them on different projects from year to year.

Recently, the company donated \$800,000 to help fund capital building campaigns for the Ronald McDonald House and the Fort Worth YMCA, and spent \$250,000 to finish out offices for the Center of Hope in Parker County, providing rent-free office space to the local charity. Besides promoting scholarship programs and local park restoration efforts, the company contributes routinely to nature preservation organizations like Ducks Unlimited, Nature Conservancy, Quail Unlimited and Streams and Valleys.

Texas Health Resources

Texas requires nonprofit hospitals to benefit their local communities by reinvesting a portion of their annual revenues, and **Texas Health Resources**, headquartered in Arlington with its flagship hospital in Fort Worth, embraces the challenge. In addition to government-sponsored indigent health care and charity care totaling almost \$118 million, THR claims 2007 charitable gifts totaling \$15.6 million in community health programs, volunteer hours and both cash and in-kind donations. Employees regularly join forces in shelter adoption programs and United Way Day of Caring events that help feed the hungry and homeless.

Americredit

Another local benefactor, automobile finance company **Americredit** lists the March of Dimes, the Salvation Army (both for seven years) and United Way (for 12 years) as its primary philanthropic initiatives in America. The company encourages employee volunteerism with a Dollars For Doers program that pays \$5 for every hour, up to 50 volunteer hours, and also allows workers to spend eight paid hours per quarter doing volunteer work.

TXU Energy

TXU Energy donates \$1 million a year to charitable organizations like United Way, Meals on Wheels and the American Red Cross, but its major focus has been on programs like TXU Energy Aid, which provides energy assistance workshops, care for the elderly and energy assistance to low-income customers. Since 1983, the company has provided \$45 million in family assistance to 320,000 families, and over the next five years, expects to provide \$150 million in this type of aid. ■