

Volunteering Is Good Business

Nonprofit Helps Connect Businesses With Volunteer Opportunities

(NAPSA)—Corporate community involvement is on the rise as more businesses recognize the importance—and value—of being socially responsible. Many companies that participate in community building activities recognize that an official volunteer program strengthens teams, improves morale, makes it easier to recruit and retain employees and enhances the company image.

However, because large companies often have thousands of employees located in many different areas, it can be challenging to effectively promote and manage local volunteer opportunities on a nationwide scale. All of that has changed ever since a small nonprofit started making it easier for everyone, including corporations, to make a difference through volunteer work.

VolunteerMatch has developed a Web site that helps anyone find a fulfilling way to volunteer. Interested volunteers simply visit www.VolunteerMatch.org and enter their ZIP code to get a customized, local list of all the available volunteer opportunities that have been posted by nonprofits on the site.

The program's corporate services—specifically designed to meet the volunteering needs of socially committed businesses—rely on the same network and technology that have already generated over 1.5 million volunteer referrals to 25,000 nonprofit volunteer organizations in just six years. As a result, volunteer-minded companies like Dell, Microsoft, Timberland and Washington Mutual rely on VolunteerMatch to help engage their employees in volunteer service.

"Community involvement is very important to us," says Marcia Long, assistant vice president, Washington Mutual. "We have 61,000 employees in nearly 40 states, and I'm happy to say a good majority of them take the time to volunteer in their communities. We participated in close to 2,000 projects nationwide last year."

Long credits the success of Washington Mutual's volunteer



Companies looking to foster volunteerism among employees now have an online resource.

efforts in part to the fact that VolunteerMatch makes it easy for employees to participate. "We provide all our employees with information about volunteer opportunities in their various communities with the help of VolunteerMatch," says Long.

VolunteerMatch has worked well for Microsoft, too. "It helps us enhance how we support organizations we want to help," says Rodney Hines, program manager.

The company utilizes VolunteerMatch to highlight community service organizations and volunteer opportunities that align with Microsoft's mission and philanthropy objectives. In addition, Microsoft can post private "Day of Caring" events, open only to Microsoft employees. "I like the fact that we can feature our own events, in addition to general volunteer opportunities," says Hines.

Since any nonprofit or tax-exempt organization can list volunteer opportunities within the VolunteerMatch network for free, employees are ensured access to the latest, most up-to-date volunteer opportunities in their community. When it comes to signing up for these opportunities, it's as easy as "point and click."

"With VolunteerMatch's corporate service, we can reach more employees, including those in rural areas, and manage nationwide volunteer projects," said Long. "It's much easier than any paper-based system you could dream up."