

Honest work

American Profit Recovery strives to include employees in its service efforts. BY CASEY PAYTON

Although they're doing honest work, it's easy for a debt collection agency to get a bad rap. But American Profit Recovery (APR), with corporate locations in Massachusetts and Michigan, developed the tagline "You'll profit from our difference," and it truly believes it. It's true, APR says, not only for those the

company does business with but even for the consumers it collects from and the communities in which it operates.

"One of our goals has always been to give back," says Michelle Riviello, director of operations. "The collection industry doesn't always have the best image. Nobody gets excited about calling us or getting a call from us. But our aim is to 'do the right thing' both internally and externally as a company."

Riviello says doing the right thing has meant not only handling collections diplomatically, but also getting involved in the community. Over the past several years the team at APR has raised and donated tens of thousands of dollars for charity and volunteered countless hours of service. It has participated in the Professional Landcare Network's (PLANET) Day of Service several times and in a variety of other opportunities.

"Last year in Michigan we adopted Proud Lake State Recreation Area and put together 50 picnic tables and built a boardwalk," Riviello says. "This past year we returned and put together some more picnic



APR takes on service work at a state park, among many other efforts.

tables, replaced some railings and did some painting . . . We found a way to volunteer in this state park without that Green Industry expertise."

Making Strides Against Breast Cancer is another charity that APR participates in. It's particularly important to the company, Riviello says, because two of its owners are breast cancer survivors. Plus, many employees walk in honor of their own friends and family who've been stricken by the disease.

Riviello says the annual walk has become a "signature fundraising event" for APR, in both Massachusetts and Michigan. Though the company has raised thousands of dollars for Making Strides, Riviello says that employees appreciate that they aren't obligated to give.

"I think that people sometimes choose not to do more community service because of the monetary commitment, so this is a nice volunteer opportunity where people can just walk, even if they haven't donated," Riviello says. "If people just want to donate their time and not any money, they at least have that option."

Riviello says finding ways APR employees can contribute without spending much money has contributed to 100 percent employee participation in at least one service project.

"For instance, last Veteran's Day we sent cards to the soldiers and we did a coat drive," she explains. "Those were two easy ways that our employees could give back and not feel like they were pressured to give a lot of money."

"The more varied you make your service opportunities, the more likely you are to get participants," she continues.

It's important to APR that employees feel connected to their service. That's helped make its "Summer Charities of Choice" a popular program. Each employee has the chance to nominate a charity that has touched his or her life to receive part of the overall pot that's collected throughout the summer.

Charities that have benefited from the program include The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, the Brain Tumor Foundation and the Ronald McDonald House. **LM**

AT A GLANCE

Supplier: American Profit Recovery

Location: Marlborough, Mass.

Director of Operations: Michelle Riviello

SELECT PROJECT LISTING:

▶ **Summer Charities of Choice**—APR employees nominate charities to receive part of the overall amount the company raises during the summer. Charities that have benefited from this program include The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, the Brain Tumor Foundation, Greyhound Friends, Michigan Walk n' Roll for ALS and more.

▶ **Making Strides Against Breast Cancer**—Over the last five years, this walk has become the signature fundraising event for American Profit Recovery, which has raised tens of thousands of dollars for the cause.

▶ **ARMing Heroes**—APR team members help raise donations to connect returning veterans seeking help with credit and financial issues with industry professionals who can help them.

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