

Well worth it

Acres Group invests in its community with an array of service work. BY CASEY PAYTON

The list of community service activities the Acres Group in Wauconda, Ill., participates in is more than 20 items long. The involvement in most of these opportunities originated organically, but Acres Group incorporated its community involvement into the com-

pany structure by initiating a wellness committee in 2010 that supports ongoing efforts and selects projects to participate in each year.

There are 22 employees on the committee. It chooses community service events that will be meaningful to both employees and the business. “For instance, we chose to support JDRF in 2012 and again in 2013 because we have over 30 employees who suffer from diabetes,” says Maureen Scheitz, vice president of human resources. “Our owner, Jim Schwantz, and our vice president of finance, Paul Washburn, are committed to the Wauconda Chamber of Commerce events where a large number of employees have the opportunity to serve.”

The company embraces community service from the top down, says Washburn. “As a larger company in Wauconda, we recognize that we can make a difference in the community with our resources and support.”

Time and resources are tight for everyone these days, so many companies say they don’t have time for commu-



Top: For the past four years Acres has hosted an annual Arbor Day sale in its Wauconda, Ill., parking lot. Proceeds assist the town in maintaining its Tree City USA status.

Bottom: Ten Acres employees participate annually in a two-day, 150-mile bike ride to benefit multiple sclerosis.

nity involvement and service opportunities. But Scheitz points out they not only do tremendous good for the community, but they also benefit the company, serving as team-building activities.

“It’s a way for employees to connect outside of work and to give back to the community or a good cause at the same time,” she says. “Most of our service involvement is commitment of time as opposed to financial donations. Time is as scarce a resource as money nowadays, but the rewards are worth the investment.”

Washburn agrees. “One has to make the time to support these events,” he says.

“Things never fit nicely into a work week, so it has to be important enough to you to work around the obstacles and still find time to give back.”

As for donated resources, he says, “it doesn’t always have to be money. Many events we support, we donate time or planning rather than funds.”

Even a small effort can make a difference, adds Sherm Fields, vice president of marketing. “We understand tough times, but every little bit helps. Donations and volunteerism that come with some real personal sacrifice tend to be the most rewarding to the giver—and hopefully the recipient as well.”

AT A GLANCE

Company: Acres Group
Headquarters: Wauconda, Ill.
CEO: Jim Schwantz

SELECT PROJECT LISTING:

▶ **Holiday family sponsorships**—For more than seven years employees have sponsored less-fortunate families, providing Thanksgiving meals and fulfilling Christmas lists.

▶ **Feed My Starving Children**—In 2010 and 2011 Acres Group volunteers packaged food for children in third-world countries.

▶ **JDRF Ron Santo Walk**—In 2012, 50-plus employees, clients, families and friends raised more than \$12,500 for juvenile diabetes research. Efforts included fundraising via a soccer tournament and a concert put on by an employee’s band.

▶ **Wauconda Food Drive**—Employees have donated approximately a pallet of food annually for 10 years. Plus, they’ve helped pick up food from others and deliver it to the food pantry.

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