



The Role of Giving

Franchisees are often finding ways to be a part of the community -- it helps business. But charitable giving has other benefits, too.

Some days franchising feels like big business. Those are the days when we are analyzing commodities markets and negotiating lower dairy prices for our franchisees, or when we are evaluating overseas expansion plans. Then our business is big business indeed. But most of the time franchising feels like a smaller business. Particularly when our franchisees are serving their customers - the heart of Cold Stone Creamery. That's when the complexities of big business are overshadowed by the intimacies of small business. And it's a great thing.

Cold Stone learned early on that one secret to business success and occupational happiness is giving. Giving great customer service, giving a wide variety of ice cream choices, and perhaps the most important giving of all, giving back. Ask any small business marketing expert and you'll hear that to have a successful local business, you must become part of the fabric of the community. That's a given and it's why so many local businesses place ads in high school yearbooks and proudly display their business names on the backs of Little Leaguers everywhere.

When the project of partnering with a charity appeared on a list of things we should do, we all agreed it was a good idea for the business and a fit because it held true to two of our core values "profit by making people happy" and "do the right thing." At the time, we had about 100 stores open and we felt big. (The year before we had just fifty stores.) We dialed up the first charity headquarters on our list. Then we dialed up a second one. And another. We suddenly weren't feeling so big. Each one rejected our offer for a joint program because our contribution projections "were just not big enough."

Even as a young company, we knew intellectually that we needed to reach out to our neighborhood communities. But we never expected the impact it would have on our franchisees and the people who work at Creamery Headquarters, the Creamery Team. What started out as something we knew we *should* do, transformed into something that is now fundamental to our mission of making people happy.

Thankfully our Creamery Team doesn't know the meaning of the word setback. That was four years ago and today, not only have we raised over \$1.2 million together, but we have also learned about ourselves, about people, about our customers, about our businesses, and have been rewarded with far more than money.

For example, Linda Querrey, a Cold Stone Creamery franchisee, raised \$4,600 during our 2004 month-long World's Largest Ice Cream Cake Social event. She led her crew to the largest single-store donation total in the history of our company. Linda was speechless at our Annual Franchisee.

Partnering with a charity is good business. But more importantly, it is good for people. This year, the World's Largest Ice Cream Cake Social took place on April 25th at Cold Stone Creameries nationwide.