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During the Season of Giving, the Franchise Community Gives Back

By Pamela Gold Waldo

“Organizations need time, talent, expertise, and the help of volunteers who understand people and the process of organizing events. Who’s better than a business owner?” commented Allen Hager, President of Right At Home, a franchise that provides in-home care and assistance to seniors and those with disabilities who want to live in their own homes but need assistance.

Take a look at many franchise concepts and you will find both home offices and franchisees devoting time, expertise, and money to helping their local communities. Small businesses are known for being integral parts of their communities, bringing strength to the economy and working to better their towns and cities. The franchise community is no exception, often giving back with great generosity and skill.

“Franchises are typically very successful, so we have the means to give back to our communities. Not only are we financially capable but we tend to have the ability necessary to make a difference: Business owners enjoy making things happen. Helping an organization is yet another creative outlet for a business owner’s talents,” explained Hager.

Right At Home: Caring Is a Way of Life

“During training, we talk to our new franchisees about helping organizations within their communities. We don’t make it mandatory, but we encourage it and we give them a process to follow if they do want to help an organization. I always tell franchisees that they will get more back than they give,” explained Hager.

From working on fundraising for local Alzheimer’s Association chapters and serving on the board of a state’s Parkinson’s Association to donating a day per week to delivering meals for Meals On Wheels, a majority of Right At Home franchisees are devoted to their communities and the clients their business serves.

Hager commented, "Community service is part of the nature of the work we do at Right At Home. This is a very rewarding business and most of our franchisees are individuals who have had very successful careers, and are now looking for something more – something that gives back to their community and which is rewarding."

Home offices of franchise companies inspire and excite their franchisees, leading by example as Hager illustrates; "Our home office is very active within the community. Most recently we all participated in a local Alzheimer’s walk. We sponsored and ran a water station on the walk. This is our ninth year sponsoring the event, and it has become a tradition for us."

“I truly believe that one of the responsibilities of business ownership is to be involved in the community,” concluded Hager.

Cold Stone Creamery: Making Wishes Come True

Look at many franchise companies and you'll find caring franchisors, franchisees, employees, and customers. For example, Cold Stone Creamery, a super premium ice cream franchise which has taken the nation by storm, held its third annual World's Largest Ice Cream Social recently and the proceeds, \$625,374.33, were donated to the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

"As a franchise organization, the Make-A-Wish Foundation provides an ideal structure by having 75 local chapters across the US. Each one of our 900 stores across the country is paired with a chapter, and all the money raised locally stays with the local chapter," explained Kevin Donnellan, Senior Public Relations Manager at Cold Stone Creamery.

Each year, Cold Stone Creamery hosts the World's Largest Ice Cream Social to benefit the organization. On a designated day each year, guests are treated to a free Make-A-Wish Ice Cream Creation at stores nationwide, and are encouraged to make a donation in return. Over the past three years, the Cold Stone Creamery franchise community and ice cream lovers have raised more than \$1.1 million to help grant the wishes of children with life-threatening medical conditions.

In 2005, Cold Stone Creamery will be hosting the event on April 25th, in honor of the Make-A-Wish Foundation's 25th Anniversary. The Make-A-Wish Creation for this year will be inspired by Micah from Boston who battles Leukemia.

"Make-A-Wish Foundation is a perfect fit for us. We are in the business of making people happy, and they are in the business of making wishes come true," said Donnellan.