

It's Never Too Early to Teach Students Social Responsibility

With a new school year beginning, the increasing importance placed on students serving the community is something to be noted. Whether it is school required service hours, after-school clubs that focus on volunteering or even reaching out through a religious community, service is an undeniable presence in the lives of most students. It has become the norm of college applicants rather than what sets them apart. However, something that could distinguish high school and even college students from their peers is partnering with local businesses and corporations for a twist on the new Corporate Social Responsibility trend of employee skill-based volunteering. This CSR approach allows employees to aid in worthy causes while developing the skills they use at work.

Local businesses looking to get involved in their community or take on a few interns can do both by forming their own programs for employee skill-based volunteering. This could be a great opportunity for high school and college students to get their feet wet in a career they are interested in while helping out their local community. Participation in such a program would give students' résumés a boost while providing them with an edge over other college applicants.

Baroan Technologies, an Elmwood Park-based technology support company, is an example of a local business who has recently offered their services to a non-profit in the area. Baroan Technologies was introduced to The Colleen GIBLIN Foundation through an existing client as they were looking for someone to assist them with their office move and technology setup. The Foundation is the first in the country dedicated solely to searching for new treatments and cures for some of the gravest childhood neurological diseases. Guy Baroan of Baroan Technologies explained, "We did our research prior to the first meeting. When we found out about The Colleen GIBLIN Foundation, then met with Meg Minassian and heard their story, we were taken aback. We found out how incredible the work they do is. It became clear that we wanted to help as much as possible so they could continue to help others."

As a part of the Ingram Micro VTN organization, and the Big Apple Chapter locally, Baroan Technologies was fortunate



Danny (center) represents an example of hope and possibility existing for children with neurological diseases, thanks to the efforts of the Colleen GIBLIN Foundation. He is shown here with Alberto Luna (left), Project Manager, and Miguel Duran (right), System Specialist, both from Baroan Technologies.

enough to be able to join a group of likeminded individuals and companies that have put together an initiative called Big Apple Cares. This initiative is a way for the group, along with vendors, to give back by providing technology makeovers to charitable organizations in need.

Ingram Micro's VentureTech Network (VTN) Big Apple Chapter donated more than \$10,000 of IT equipment, licensing, and services to The Colleen GIBLIN Foundation as part of the Chapter's Big Apple Cares community outreach program. The official "IT Makeover" reveal was held in August 2011.

Meg Minassian, Executive Director of The Colleen GIBLIN Foundation explained, "The gift of an IT Makeover from the Big Apple group is an incredible gesture of compassion, generosity and done in the true spirit of humanitarianism. Each and everyone involved is a part of making a difference in the lives of children and providing hope to them in a special and unique way. What the Big Apple is providing is far more than we ever dreamed about by way of technology. Not only is it an incredible cost saving to the Foundation, which will translate to additional research initiatives, but the technology they donated will continue to benefit our mission for decades to come."

Such a partnership between a non-profit in need of services and a local business ready and able to provide such services should be a regular occurrence. If students are able to see the connection between volunteerism and business while they are in school, they will be more likely to bring service-based practices to the workplaces they eventually enter. This could begin a cycle of students and businesses working together with the community and non-profits, and collaborative initiatives like the Big Apple Cares would become more prevalent.

For more information on VTN Big Apple Chapter or The Colleen GIBLIN Foundation:

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