

Partnerships That Are Making a Difference

Hilary Stephens 17 September 2017

Partnerships between For-Profits and Nonprofits are not always easy. Not every For Profit sees the value of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), a management initiative that integrates social and environmental concerns into business operations. Many argue that money invested in CSR is inconsistent with efforts to maximize profits. Yet, that is not the case at the Faulkner and Ciocca Dealerships. They believe their connection to a cause is making a difference as auto sales in Bucks County are booming.

Customers like to see a connection with a cause and to know that their purchase indirectly benefits a larger need. "Cause marketing" refers to a type of marketing involving cooperative efforts of a for profit business and a nonprofit organization for mutual benefit. It can change consumer perception and purchasing behavior. It can also encourage brands to spend more time and effort on social programs. Cause marketing works because good businesses want to make a difference and let the public know of their involvement. According to lovetrees.org, 79 percent of consumers state that they would switch brands if one was affiliated with a good cause. Sales at companies like Tom's Shoes (Tom's) have exploded, due

to their cause marketing. Tom's offers one free pair of shoes for a person in need for every pair sold in a store or online. And that makes a significant impact.

On the first Saturday of May, nine Faulkner and Ciocca Dealerships in Bucks County, came together to support Woods Services (Woods) during its inspiring Run for Woods 5K Run/Walk/Roll. Woods is a nonprofit multi-service population health management and advocacy organization that provides innovative, comprehensive, and integrated health, education, housing, workforce, behavioral health, and case management services to nearly 700 children and adults with intellectual and developmental disability (IDD) and brain injury. Woods provides a continuum of evidenced-based treatments and a public health approach to develop innovative and highly individualized supports and services for individuals with the most complex and intensive medical and behavioral healthcare needs that empower them to reach their highest potential. "This is an extremely challenging population that deserves more attention," says Joe Faulkner, the parent of a child at Woods and a partner in the Faulkner dealerships.

In order to involve their employees in supporting Woods, Joe Faulkner, visited every dealership with his business partner, Gregg Ciocca, two years ago to educate the dealers and their staff on the prevalence of IDD and the challenges facing the individuals served by Woods, including Joe's son, Michael. The staff listened with

interest and were inspired by Joe's message. The following year, Joe and Gregg invited three Woods residents to come to the showrooms to tell their own story. The employees broke out in thunderous applause when they heard these personal stories and better understood the challenges each person had overcome. Virtually everyone in the room wanted to get on board raising funds for Woods by participating in the Run for Woods. The event raised more than \$200,000 last year, about half of which was raised by the employees of nine dealerships and their families. The dealerships are supported by their partners at Ally Financial, Ethos Group, Kelly Blue Book, Autotrader, GM Financial, Subaru of America, Volkswagen Credit, Audi Financial Services, and a host of other partners in the auto industry. "It's been wonderful for us and for our employees," stated Gregg Ciocca, President of Ciocca Dealerships. "Our dealers work hard at this, while also selling lots of cars and trucks. It gives our dealers a real sense of purpose."

Team building is essential to the success of the dealership teams. According to statistics provided by DonorDrive.com, teams raise 10 times as much as individual participants and 59 percent of event dollars come from teams. Why? Because fundraisers are braver as a group, more supportive of one another, and thrive on competition.

It is not just the Faulkner and Ciocca dealerships that are supporting this event. The goodwill is spreading. Outback

Steakhouse, Carrabba's Italian Grill, and Corner Bakery Café also believe in the benefits of CSR and believe that giving back and participating in community events is key to their growing popularity. Outback and Carrabba's provided lunch for the more than 1,000 individuals who participated in the Run for Woods last year and the number of community sponsors grows annually.

Only time will tell if this for-profit/nonprofit partnership is making a difference for Faulkner-Ciocca, but one thing is for sure, the nearly 700 people with IDD at Woods are feeling the impact that a \$100,000 donation can make.

Author Bio

Hilary Stephens joined Woods Services as Vice President of Development in March 2014. Ms. Stephens drives the strategic direction and management of fundraising activities at Woods, including major gifts, corporate partnerships, special events, and grants from both private and public sectors.