

Impactful Corporate Philanthropy Comes from Within

Sue West 23 October 2012

Introduction

After September 11, 2001, when the world watched the Twin Towers fall, many employees at SEI Investments Company located in Oaks, PA, began their own efforts to help. Many employees individually began raising money and needed supplies for the recovery efforts. The company recognized this, and in an effort to help, pulled together all the disparate efforts within the organization, and thus began the start of its employee-led, company-sponsored philanthropy effort called The SEI Cares Program. These employee-led efforts have expanded substantially through the years and have helped foster employee engagement, grow meaningful partnerships with local organizations about which employees are passionate, and support a core value of the company in the global community around social responsibility.

The Rise of Employee-Led Community Philanthropy at SEI

The Rise of Employee-Led Community

Philanthropy at SEI

SEI is not a household name, but it has been a major player in the financial services industry since 1968. The company is also one of the larger employers in financial services in the Greater Philadelphia area, and encompasses over 2,300 people in the U.S. and several offices around the world.

If you have ever driven on Route 422 around the Oaks exit, you passed SEI's unique campus. Set on 93 acres, the multi-colored and multi-material office buildings were designed to promote an advanced concept of an open environment: no walls or offices and furniture on wheels. Often named as one of the best places to work, SEI's culture is strong and fosters autonomy, creativity and innovation. These same qualities went into creating and evolving The SEI Cares Program.

Senior executives within the company left the fine-tuning of a community philanthropy program in the hands of those who would sustain it: the employees. So when the initial fundraising and gifting for September 11th was finished, a group of employees set out to figure out how to maintain the momentum around philanthropy inside the company. They started by hosting town hall meetings to gather feedback from employees about the fundraising process, about where to focus resources, and about how to engage employees in philanthropic work. The result was the creation of a not-so-typical corporate

philanthropy program. In fact, it is not referred to as a "corporate philanthropy" program; rather, it is a "community philanthropy" program. The difference goes beyond the word choice. The difference is pervasive in how the program is governed and sustained.

An employee board was created, as was an initial funding focus to help economically underprivileged children in the local communities. The board outlined an annual fundraising process, defined grantmaking criteria and determined a grantmaking calendar to be followed, all based on feedback from fellow employees. The board and company did not set up a separate private foundation; all money raised goes to The SEI Cares Fund, a donor-advised fund within the SEI Giving Fund (a program of the Renaissance Charitable Foundation).

The SEI Cares Program is company-sponsored and supported, which means that the company's many resources and employee policies are aligned with the efforts. Charities must meet specific criteria, be nominated by employees, and be thoroughly evaluated by employees through a process that includes both proposal reviews and site visits. Employees take the evaluation of potential nonprofit grantees very seriously. Most employees were new to grantmaking in the beginning, but they drew upon skills they used in their daily work lives to analyze, think critically and make good decisions.

The program has evolved over the past 11 years. What

stands out most is the many ways for employees to engage in philanthropic work and the alignment of the funding mission with the passions of employees. These two aspects have proven critical to the success of the program. Today, The SEI Cares Program supports the global communities in which SEI operates in five targeted areas:

- Economically disadvantaged youth
- Animal rights, welfare, and services
- Community service
- Environment
- Health and health-related services

The Unique Aspects of The SEI Cares Program

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The SEI Cares Program is entirely employee-driven and extremely flexible. Any employee can start a charitable effort on behalf of any charitable organization. As efforts grow internally (getting more employees involved, providing more service hours, raising more funds), the charitable organization they support can become a candidate for formalized support from The SEI Cares Fund on an annual basis if it fits within the five targeted areas.

All of the organizations supported by employees in The

SEI Cares Program started as a result of the passion and drive of an individual employee or small group of employees. As a result, every charity has an internal SEI volunteer champion to organize and work with the charity and to enlist help from other interested employees via service opportunities or fundraising events. The effort and impact SEI has on each charity is meaningful to the charitable organization. Today, there are many ways for employees to get involved as a volunteer with The SEI Cares Program:

Global Volunteer Days (GVD): The GVD program gives volunteers in all SEI offices the opportunity to volunteer their time in service, working together to support those in need in the surrounding communities.

Martin Luther King Day of Service (MLK Day): Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "Life's most persistent and urgent question is: 'What are you doing for others?'" The MLK Day of Service is a part of United We Serve, a national call to service initiative. SEI Cares has sponsored volunteer events on MLK Day since 2005.

SCOPE: The SEI Cares Outreach and Philanthropic Endeavors (SCOPE) program organizes two to four monthly volunteer days where employees from participating business units can spend a ½ day volunteering with one or more local nonprofits during business hours.

Rejuvenate: Since 2006, there have been eight Rejuvenate trips involving more than 200 employee volunteers, representing all divisions and many of the global locations of SEI. The team has worked with Habitat for Humanity building and rehabilitating homes in both the Gulf of Mexico region and the Charleston, South Carolina area.

Focused Charity Events: Throughout the year, the employee champions of the SEI Cares focused charities organize a variety of volunteer and awareness events.

SEI Cares Volunteers Around the World: Employees in SEI's global offices participate in a variety of volunteer and fundraising events to support charities in the areas in which they work and live.

Employee Initiatives: The SEI Cares Employee Initiatives program encourages grassroots fundraising and participation efforts that benefit charitable organizations. Involved employees can join forces with fellow employees sharing common interests in order to get increased financial support.

The Impact of The SEI Cares Program

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The SEI Cares Program continues to grow in volume and impact. Within SEI's corporate intranet site sits a link to

The SEI Cares Program. It is here that employees learn about The SEI Cares Program and identify ways to get involved.

With a volunteer SEI Employee Champion serving as the liaison between the nonprofit organization and the SEI community, grantmaking, volunteer opportunities and awareness events throughout the year can be coordinated. Today, many efforts are underway. In 2011, alone, SEI employees collectively contributed:

- More than 7,300 hours of service in volunteer activities.
- As part of the SEI Cares Rejuvenate program, 30 volunteers traveled to Johns Island, South Carolina, near Charleston, for five days of work, and a donation of \$11,000 was made to Habitat for Humanity International and the Sea Island affiliate.
- The SEI Cares Fund donated \$91,900 to eight focused charities.
- Through participation in the Pennsylvania EITC program, \$175,000 was granted to eleven organizations focused on education.
- SEI employees' personal philanthropic efforts with qualified nonprofits resulted in \$20,000 in employee initiative grants.
- In total, SEI Cares in partnership with many SEI Employees combined to assist 85 organizations in 2011.

As the above shows, the impact of an employee-led, company sponsored philanthropy effort is far-reaching: engaging employees around their passion for giving back, supporting charitable organizations in the local community in a meaningful way, and supporting a corporate value of social responsibility. It is in this manner that corporate philanthropy can have the most impact—it comes from within the organization and is led by the employees passionate about giving.

Sue West is Director of SEI Private Wealth Management, which provides advice to bring clarity into the complex issues faced by wealthy individuals and families so they can make better decisions for themselves, their families, and their communities. SEI Private Wealth Management is an umbrella name for various life and wealth advisory services provided by SEI Investments Management Corporation (SIMC). SIMC is a subsidiary of SEI. For more information about SEI Private Wealth Management, visit www.seic.com/privatewealth.