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FEATURE

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How 10 construction companies are embracing the spirit of giving

With Thanksgiving just days away, we're taking a look past global turmoil and the recent divisive election to focus on how the construction industry is giving back to local communities across the nation. For most of these companies, charity is a year-round endeavor, giving employees and executives alike a chance to get involved with a wide array of charities and community-building causes.

1. Consigli Construction

The staff of Consigli Construction Company, a Boston-based firm, is involved in such charities as the Boston Cares Bed Project, a campaign initiated by Boston Mayor Martin Walsh to build beds for the 1,500 area children who don't have their own. The company also created the Consigli Foundation, which hosts fundraising activities throughout the year and donates to such organizations as the American Red Cross, Habitat for Humanity, the Cambridge Family and Children's Service, local elementary and secondary schools and the Wentworth Institute of Technology.

President Matthew Consigli said the company believes that focusing on children's health and welfare issues is vital. "For us, giving back in this way is crucial because just as we build for a living, we're working just as hard to build for a better tomorrow," he said.

2. Shawmut Design and Construction

Shawmut Design and Construction, also based in Boston, considers historic renovations and restorations one of its strong suits, but charitable giving is also a key part of the company's identity. The firm has taken part in events like the annual Construction Rhode Island competition — in which the Shawmut team built a replica of Katy Perry's left shark from Super Bowl XLIX out of canned goods — and construction of a tree house for a terminally ill child via Make-a-Wish's Massachusetts and Rhode Island organization.

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Shawmut CEO

Shawmut CEO Les Hiscoe said helping community members is as important as building structures that play such an important role in their lives. "I am so proud of how our employees not only raise critical funds but donate their time and skills to those most in need," he said. This summer, Shawmut completed its ninth Pan-Mass Challenge, a two-day charity bike-a-thon, and raised almost \$140,000 to support Dr. Christopher Sweeney's research at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

3. Construction Industry Advisory Council

The Construction Industry Advisory Council (CIAC), based at Texas A&M University's Construction Science Department, embodies the old adage of "strength in numbers." The group, which includes more than 100 companies, was established to provide support to the university's construction department and its students, but it has also assisted in student charity initiatives like the BUILD program. BUILD was founded in honor of those who died in a 1999 bonfire, and the student-run organization now turns shipping containers into portable medical clinics for use around the world in the name of those killed.

Martin Montgomery, part of the BUILD team, said the CIAC and its members have contributed \$35,000 to BUILD this year and raised an additional \$25,000, representing "companies pooling their resources to support a project which will save thousands of lives in developing countries." Dave Fleming, CIAC president, said the BUILD program is something in which all students can participate and that it "reinforces how character, communication, creativity, competition, competence, collaboration, courage and community can be combined in such a meaningful way to build leaders as well as excellent medical facilities."

4. Schwob Building Company

Schwob Building Company in Dallas is a firm that devotes itself to children-related causes. In March, Schwob, along with other area construction companies and organizations like the Associated Builders and Contractors/Associated General Contractors of America TEXO association, helped raise \$56,000 for the Children's Health System of Texas during KIDstruction Week. During one payroll period, employees of participating companies donate \$1 for each hour they work or some other amount connected to how much they earn during the week. Many employers match employee contributions, and 100% of the money raised goes toward a variety of programs ranging from translation services to pet therapy.

Tony Rader, Schwob's vice president of business development, said company employees are enthusiastic about programs like KIDstruction and drive participation themselves. "Making a difference is what it is all about, and helping others reach their goals excites all of us," he said. The company also supports Camp John Marc, a summer camp for medically and physically challenged children, through its sponsorship of the annual CBRE Chefs Showcase in Dallas.

5. Windover Construction

Massachusetts-based Windover Construction's charitable aspirations are so wide-reaching that the company has an employee-driven "Social Sustainability Committee" working on its four areas of outreach: women, children and families; education; military/veterans assistance; and the environment. "Connecting to a greater purpose beyond the bricks and mortar of construction allows us to be reminded of the importance of hope while also feeling energized by our investment in others," said Lee Dellicker, president and CEO.

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Windover employees participate in Build Health International initiatives such as spearheading a boot drive and delivering furniture for the organization's ongoing Haitian operations. The company's Social Sustainability Committee also donates "fully-loaded" backpacks to local high school students in its hometown of Beverly, MA, through the Beverly Bootstraps Back-to-School Bonanza. Windover builds apartment communities as part of a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs push to end veteran homelessness, and employees regularly organize and prepare food for resident events, providing social interaction and a connection to the community for veterans.

6. Skanska USA

The USA division of Skanska, one of the biggest construction companies in the world, considers its projects opportunities to help surrounding communities. This year, the company sponsored the Community Giveback Challenge as part of its Diversity & Inclusion Week. During the week, employees in the company's regional offices reach out and participate in ongoing local charitable efforts such as food bank drives, park cleanups and a variety of walkathons. Skanska USA also hosts educational programs for area minority- and women-owned businesses and organizes an annual trip to Mexico to build low-income housing. In addition, local Boston high school students decorated the fence around one of the company's projects this year after workers pitched in to buy the school gift cards to use toward much-needed supplies and food for the students.

7. Mortenson

Minnesota-based M.A. Mortenson Company is a high-powered presence in the U.S. construction industry, and it aims to encourage its employees all over the country to live out the company values of trust, responsibility, safety, teamwork, service and stewardship. The company is a title sponsor of the annual Breath of Life Gala put on by the Minnesota/Dakotas chapter of the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation and was honored this year for leading a \$10 million fundraising effort for the organization. Mortenson has been involved with CFF since senior executive Paul Cossette introduced the company to its mission.

8. Trimble

Employees of Trimble, which provides mapping, GPS, drone and asset-locating equipment and services for the construction industry, are also making a difference through the Trimble Women's Network of Colorado. This year, the group worked with Habitat for Humanity to repair and renovate a home for a family that had lost theirs in a major flood a few years earlier. "It was really inspiring to roll up our sleeves and build something for a family who lost their home," said Sarah Miler, operations manager at Trimble. "The experience allowed me to get a taste of the actual work that some of our customers do day-to-day." The Trimble Women's Network is a company-wide support and mentoring program.

9. Linbeck Group

Similar to other companies, Texas-based Linbeck Group spreads its resources over a large number of charities and volunteer organizations. "Serving others is fundamental to our guiding principles. It's in our corporate DNA," said Linbeck CEO David Stueckler. Among those efforts, Linbeck employees reach out to their local communities by helping to prepare meals for families staying at the Ronald McDonald House facilities in Fort Worth and Houston; volunteering at the Houston Food Bank; taking part in 5Ks and walkathons to benefit organizations like the Muscular Dystrophy Association and the Knowledge is Power Program school initiative; building homes for local families with Habitat for Humanity; and tutoring local students online.

10. Marcum

The spirit of giving is pervasive among construction companies, but those who provide ancillary services to the industry are also generous with their time as well. Certainly, that applies to accounting and advisory firm Marcum. The Marcum Foundation benefits charities all year, and on the day before Thanksgiving, Marcum will close its offices for its second annual Day of Service. This year, the company is partnering with Feeding America, and Marcum employees will volunteer at their local food banks and food-based organizations on Wednesday.

Joseph Molloy, director of the construction industry group at Marcum, said of the Day of Service, "Helping others who are less fortunate is important to me especially at this time of year. It helps me appreciate the everyday things that I often take for granted."