

SAN DIEGO PROGRAM SETS BEST PRACTICE STANDARD FOR COMMUNITY GIFTING

by John Fineberg
Ability Communications

The challenge was made. Go out and find non-profit organizations that might want a \$1,000 donation. What a great job!

The Wells Fargo Community Partners program in San Diego County started with this premise: “In order for Wells Fargo to be a community bank, we have to become more involved on a personal level,” says Diane Derousseau, senior vice president and division manager, Wells Fargo Bank, San Diego County. “Not just financially, but also with our hands and hearts, in the communities in which we work and live.”

The program was established to educate Wells Fargo branch managers and officers about the mission of the foundation and the non-profit community organizations it helps to support. The program was also established to encourage and prepare Wells Fargo personnel to make a commitment and become more intimately involved as volunteers and board members of community non-profits.

Branch managers and officers were given one month to identify specific non-profit organizations in their markets, then make recommendations for gifts of \$1,000. “Empowering them in this way was a real eye opener,” says Derousseau, “because so many of them were unfamiliar with the Wells Fargo Foundation and the types of organizations it looks to support.”

A list of 60 organizations with programs serving low-income adults and children in San Diego County were submitted to Jonathan Weedman, vice president, Wells Fargo Foundation. Because they all met the criteria, every single one of them was approved.

In celebration of the program’s success, the first Wells Fargo Community Partners Gifting Event was held at the Old Globe Theater in August. City council members and state senators representing the area were in attendance, as were representatives from the non-profits, their banking store partners and the foundation. “Through the event we were able to let the general population know about the extent of our gifting, which amounted to about \$1.2 million in the San Diego and Imperial counties this year alone.

All 60 participating Wells Fargo team members and their respective community

partners were invited on stage individually to receive a \$1,000 check. One by one, in heart-felt speeches, each recipient took the opportunity to express his or her feelings about being chosen and how the gift would be used by their organization. "It was the most incredible experience I've ever had," says Derausseau. "By the end of the event, the whole audience was in tears."

For her work on the project, Derausseau will be receiving a special commendation from the San Diego County Board of Supervisors on December 7. "Of course I'm flattered," she says. "But, more than the award, the thing that means the most to me was seeing the reactions of the crowd at the event and hearing about what a difference our contributions will make in their communities."

"Diane has always understood the power of strong ties to the community," says Colleen Anderson, executive vice president, Wells Fargo Bank, San Diego County. "By making employees integral to the selection of organizations and involving them in the event, she has personalized charitable giving and reinforced Wells Pride in our employees."

The Community Partners program in San Diego County is expected to double in size next year. Because of the positive feedback, the program has been recognized as a "best practice" standard and will be used as a model for other programs around the state of California.

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