

Good News Department

Volunteering Is Good For You And Good For Business

(NAPSA)—Volunteering is not just good for individuals, it's good for businesses, too.

As more businesses recognize the importance and value of being socially responsible, corporate community involvement is on the rise. Many companies recognize that an official volunteer program not only enhances the company image, but strengthens teams, improves morale, and makes it easier to attract and retain employees.

However, because large companies often have thousands of employees, it has been challenging to promote and manage volunteer opportunities on a nationwide scale. That has changed ever since a small nonprofit started making it easier for everyone, including corporations, to make a difference through volunteer work.

Companies that are looking to foster volunteerism now have an online resource. VolunteerMatch has developed a Web site that helps anyone find a fulfilling way to volunteer.

Interested volunteers simply visit www.VolunteerMatch.org and enter their ZIP code to get a customized list of all the available volunteer opportunities.

The program's business services—specifically designed to meet the volunteering needs of socially committed businesses—rely on the same network and technology that have already generated nearly 3 million volunteer matches to over 40,000 nonprofit volunteer organizations in just eight years.

As a result, volunteer-minded companies like Target and Exelon



Finding a volunteer opportunity is easier than you might imagine and many companies are helping employees do just that.

rely on VolunteerMatch to engage employees in volunteer service, while other companies such as REI partner with VolunteerMatch to mobilize their customers to get involved.

Target's volunteer program is a key component of the company's philanthropic structure at both the national and local level.

Last year, Target team members and retirees donated more than 315,000 hours of service and completed over 7,000 community-based projects in the areas of education, the arts, social services and disaster relief.

As a VolunteerMatch partner, the company uses the nationally acclaimed nonprofit service to provide a network of volunteer opportunities to its employees within the company's headquarters, and an online tool to manage and evaluate its volunteer activity.

Recreational Equipment, Inc. (REI), a national retail cooperative providing quality outdoor gear and clothing, is dramatically expanding its ability to connect customers

with opportunities for environmental stewardship through a new partnership with the online service.

REI currently works with more than 400 nonprofit groups and clubs focused on conservation and access to outdoor recreation. VolunteerMatch provides a link on the REI.com home page, under the Get Out There tab, to a nationwide network of volunteer opportunities.

Since any nonprofit or tax-exempt organization can list volunteer opportunities within the network for free, companies are ensured access to the latest, most up-to-date volunteer opportunities.

In fact, Exelon's entire 17,000-strong workforce has access to this diverse network, meaning any Exelon employee can receive a list of volunteer opportunities matched to individual interests and location. Employees can also track employee volunteer efforts, which is important to the company's efforts to recognize and reward exceptional volunteers.

The company will provide a total of \$50,000 in grants to the nonprofit organizations where the winners volunteer. It's the company's way of sharing its commitment to the community with its employees.

VolunteerMatch will help Exelon identify candidates for this award and simplify the application process. As more than 1,000 employees have already signed up to volunteer and reported nearly 20,000 hours of service, there is unlikely to be a shortage of deserving candidates.