

EMPLOYER BRAND GIVES BACK

a collection of employee
giving stories

ENTER



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INTRODUCTION



exaqueo is a small business, and our team is constantly reminded of how grateful we are to be of service to our clients. In this storybook, you'll meet some of the incredible people at our client organizations who have made giving back part of the fabric of their lives.

As an employer brand experience firm, we know that an integral part of an employer brand is the stories you tell. They make you who you are and attract candidates to your organization. Great employer brand stories have a purpose. They're not just testimonials, they're an insight into the people who make up your workforce DNA. And some of the most popular stories are the ones featuring all the good that your employees do.

This collection of employee giving stories from our clients is a testament to the power of sharing real stories from everyday heroes. Doing good reflects positively on the person, the community and the organization. And each story recognizes, celebrates and connects back to their own unique employment experience.

Each featured employee was hand-selected by their employer because of their commitment to giving back. We hope you enjoy reading their stories, and are inspired to capture and share the stories that drive your employer brand. And at the end of this storybook, we've included recommendations to help you elevate your employer brand while doing good for others.



GIVING STORIES



Larry Spruill



Karen Wagner, RN



Scott Campbell



Josh Billings



Charles Crook



CSAA Insurance Group,
a AAA Insurer



Jeremiah Rifareal



Lisa Dieguez and Jessica Rivera



Marguerite Vera



Donya Merritt and Sheila Merritt



Melissa Lanzo



CSAA Insurance Group,
a AAA Insurer



Meg Kinney



Sondra Salas



Housing Area Coordinator

Princeton University

Employee for 28 Years



Volunteering often starts as an answer to a call for assistance. But for Larry Spruill, it started in his heart. A vital contributor to the Princeton University community, Larry's been fostering a spirit of goodwill since his first day on the job — 28 years ago.

MOTIVATED TO MAKE A CHANGE

One afternoon, Larry Spruill found himself attending a funeral for an 18-year-old shot and killed in Trenton, New Jersey. Larry had to go through a metal detector just to get into the church. "I knew a lot of the kids [at the funeral]," he says, "and when I looked in their eyes, it was like something was missing. [They] were too relaxed about it as if they didn't take it seriously enough. 'Life goes on', a few of them remarked to me."

So in 2004, Larry Spruill co-founded Committed Princetonians with a group of concerned men in the community who assembled to address a gap in the need for leadership for young men. For the past 13 years, alongside his wife Fern Spruill, the group has mentored and guided young men and women who might otherwise have found a different path. They host dinners, speakers, field trips, fundraisers, community service projects and provide a community platform for challenging youth discussions.

MAKING GIVING BACK A WAY OF LIFE

Larry's commitment to the community goes even further. He's also deeply involved in "Not in Our Town," a group committed to working for racial justice and respect for all in Princeton, NJ. As a member of the Princeton Human Services Department, he helps young students find summer employment. Larry also works with LALDEF (The Latin American Legal Defense and Education Fund) to assist the immigrant community in Princeton, and helps local police officers build relationships with community youth.

Volunteering is a part of his life. "It's a lot of work, but I am a very energetic person. I get joy from what I do; I am a voice for the voiceless."

CREATING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Larry is not looking for gratitude for his lifetime of service. But it has found him. In 2014, he received the Journey Award at Princeton University's Martin Luther King Day Celebration for his commitment to giving back, and furthering diversity and inclusion across the University community.



Larry Spruill



"I can't even tell you how much the University does. It's like a family to me. The University has always been there for me and still is today."

From as early as he can remember, the University has been fostering the spirit of openness and inclusion. Growing up in Princeton, the University opened its campus and doors to everyone. He remembers using the skating rink as a young child and that spirit of appreciation remains today.



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Regional Director

Texas Home Health, an AccentCare Company

Employee Since 1997

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As a Registered Nurse in the home health industry, Karen Wagner chooses to dedicate her life to giving, healing and bringing comfort to those in need every day – professionally and personally.

EMBRACING EVERYONE

When Karen talks about family, you can hear her smile as she shares her joy of being a wife, mother, grandmother, sister, daughter, friend, coach and healthcare colleague. Without hesitation, she affirms, “family is the most important thing.” But for Karen, “family” means so much more than her immediate household.

To Karen, family means embracing anyone in need, including her patients, clients, colleagues and the community around her. Her arms reach wide when extending her hugs – especially to the sick, the elderly and those longing for someone to care. “If I could, I would visit everyone who does not have someone to visit them.”

REACHING BEYOND LOCAL

In the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, Karen reached out beyond her local community to her colleagues along the Texas Gulf Coast to offer support. Seeing everything unfold “weighed so heavy on my heart I had to do something. I just had to.” She collected the extra housewares around her home and planned a vacation day to take them to her fellow Texans in need. As word of her plans spread, Karen’s generous spirit was contagious.

Within days, she had a large moving truck full of water, diapers, blankets, furniture and clothing items ready to share. “The drive to Beaumont, Texas was so humbling, and to see all of the damage and trash was terrible. It was so emotional.” Karen is now working on filling her next truckload of disaster relief items.

FINDING LITTLE WAYS TO MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE

It is not only the big events that inspire Karen to give. She recognizes “it is the smallest things that mean so much to people.” Inspired by her mother’s love for everyone and encouragement to volunteer, Karen shared her childhood time performing skits while visiting nursing home residents. Today, she continues to bring happiness to those around her.



Karen Wagner, RN



Seeing everything unfold “weighed so heavy on my heart I had to do something. I just had to.”

On any given day, outside of caring for patients, she will make time to visit someone living alone or with compromised mobility. She may alter her route to drop-off something small, like hand wipes, to a family she knows will appreciate the luxury. “I grew up with nothing but love. I know what hard times are and if there is something I can do to make someone’s life easier or better ... I do it.” Karen dreams of offering a home where aging

and disabled patients can receive quality care when they cannot afford it.

With a heart for giving, and a passion for creating smiles and touching hearts every day, Karen shares, “There is so much to do and so many people in need. I wish I could do so much more.”



Associate Director, U.S. Patient Advocacy
Takeda Pharmaceutical Company Ltd.
Employee Since 2015

Years ago, Takeda was one of Scott Campbell's clients and while attending a patient ambassador summit, he was blown away by the company's connection to the patient community.

CONNECTED TO THE PATIENT COMMUNITY

In 2015, Scott made the decision to join Takeda's marketing team and more than one year ago, he joined the Patient Advocacy team. Today, Scott continues to keep Takeda's patient connection alive by leading its efforts to ensure patients' attitudes and experiences are incorporated into the company's plans, products, and culture.



PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Scott's role in patient advocacy provides the opportunity to give back to the community through his job. At Takeda, he works closely with patients and patient advocacy groups to create programs that help educate and empower patients – and have a positive impact on their journey. This allows him to work closely with Takeda's world-class research and development teams, infuse the patient perspective into business decisions, and help this pharmaceutical giant keep patients at the heart of everything they do.

GREATER UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATION

As part of his work, Scott creates opportunities for other Takeda employees to hear and learn from patients. This provides a deeper understanding of the emotional and physical burdens of their disease and its treatments and leads to more employees having an even greater appreciation for what they do at Takeda.

Scott's passion for patients and Takeda extends outside of his office walls. In early 2017, he participated in Moving Mountains for Multiple Myeloma, where he hiked the Grand Canyon's Bright Angel Trail in Arizona with four patients with multiple myeloma.

EMPLOYEES ARE EAGER TO GIVE BACK

Takeda makes a genuine difference for the community, and employees, like Scott, are eager and excited to give back. Recently in Boston, Massachusetts, Takeda had the largest team of 5K runners, and hundreds of employees and patient ambassadors participated together in a Light the Night event benefiting the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society.

It doesn't require a lot of asking to get Takeda employees to make an impact in their communities. As the associate director of U.S. patient advocacy, Scott is proud to work for Takeda and equally proud of his colleagues. He's even hoping to get his dog, Tupper, involved in Takeda's giving back efforts by getting her certified as a therapy dog.



Scott Campbell



Recently in Boston, Massachusetts, Takeda had the largest team of 5K runners, and hundreds of employees and patient ambassadors participated together in a Light the Night event benefiting the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society.



Regional Director

MedStar National Rehabilitation Network

Employee for 20+ Years



For two decades, Josh Billings has been a physical therapist. Currently, he serves as a Regional Director for MedStar National Rehabilitation Network (MNRN). Josh oversees seven clinics, treats patients (most of whom are runners and baseball players), is MNRN's running program specialist, and is the community outreach lead for MedStar's Pediatric Sports Medicine program.

WHEN PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL WORLDS COLLIDE

With three sons (ages 11, 8 and 1), Josh stays busy outside of work, helping to coach youth soccer, basketball and baseball. This gives Josh an up-close perspective on where things can sometimes go off the tracks in today's youth sports environment. It also lets him see some of the reasons that 70% of kids drop out of sports altogether by age 13. This is becoming recognized as a large contributing factor to community health problems like childhood obesity.





At the other end of the spectrum, today's youth sports culture increasingly encourages single-sport specialization at younger and younger ages. While this leads to rapid improvements in sport-specific skills it also increases a child's risk for injury and burnout. The majority of Josh's clinical practice in treating young athletes does not involve acute or traumatic injuries, but ones that occur from overuse and should have been preventable.

EDUCATING PARENTS AND COACHES

Realizing that today's model for youth sports does not align with research for what creates better athletes and an optimal experience for kids, Josh has dedicated himself to educating parents, coaches, youth sports administrators and kids about how to do it better. Most coaches are well-meaning volunteer parents who do not realize that training methods and coaching approaches for six-year-olds need to be different from those for teenagers. There is also an assumption that more sports training is better, which often results in overtraining and kids ending up in his clinic with an injury.

Through coach and parent education, and the collaborative expertise of MedStar, Josh is living the mission of creating healthier communities.

ADVOCATING SPORTS CAN STILL BE FUN

Finding ways to improve sports experiences for kids takes time and effort, little steps and big ideas. With a desire to create even greater impact through education, Josh is helping to lead MedStar's first Pediatric Sports Medicine conference. This youth sports conference and training day is designed to give kids opportunities to have fun and play multiple sports. While the kids have fun in healthy activity, more than 100 coaches will be trained on the ideal youth sports experience.

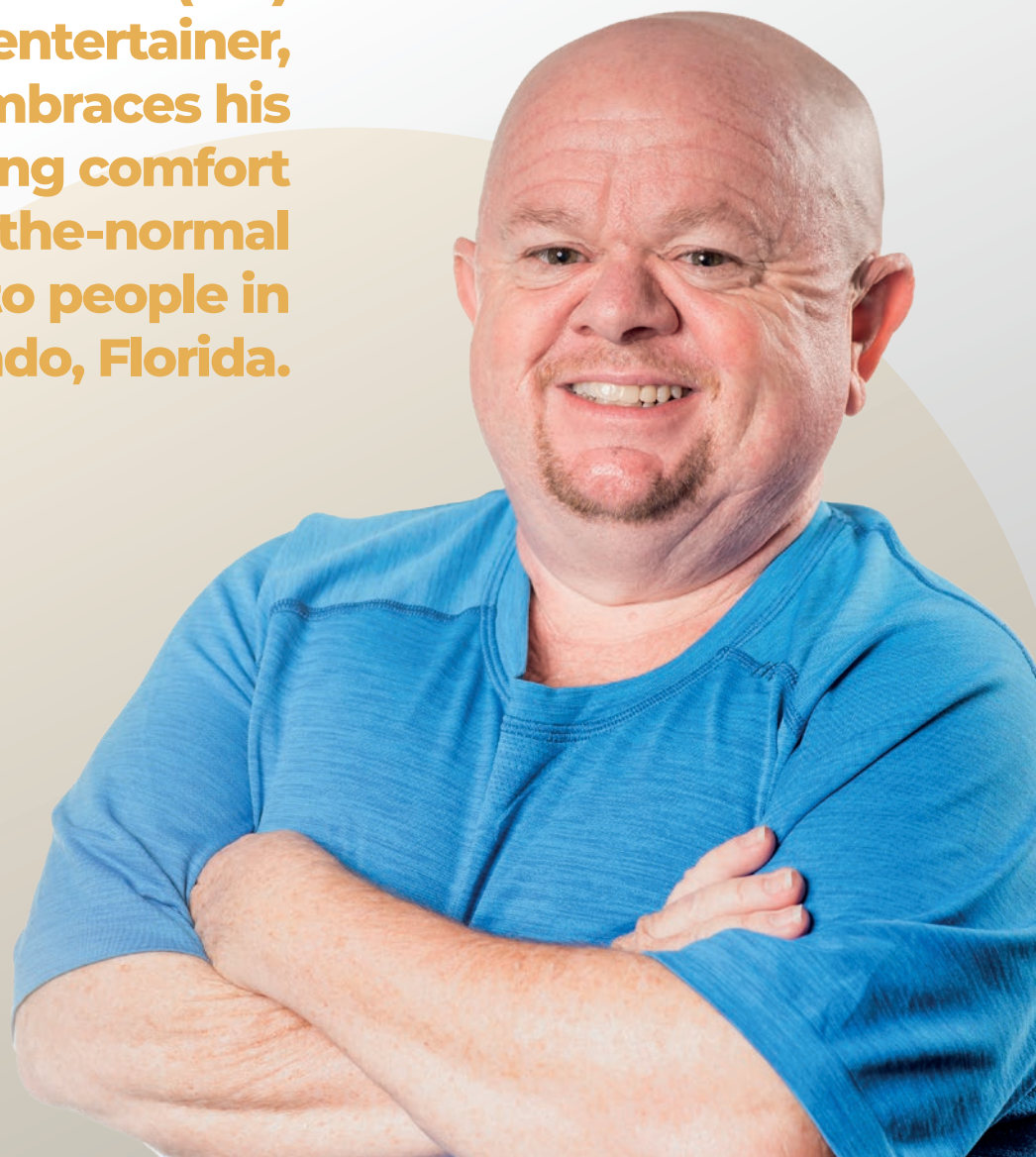


Show Technician

Universal Orlando Resort

Team Member Since 1994

As a Universal Orlando Resort (UO) Team Member and entertainer, Charles Crook embraces his unique position to bring comfort and thrilling, out-of-the-normal experiences to people in need throughout Orlando, Florida.



ENTERTAINING THEIR EXPERIENCE

Being a Give Kids the World (GKtW) volunteer for over 20 years is a natural extension of Charles's professional career in the entertainment industry. He loves his work and the opportunity to bring fun and happiness to families with children with terminal conditions. From welcome to departure and photographer to performer, Charles is an active participant in all phases of the GKtW experience.

He takes pride in helping families create memories they otherwise may not have the opportunity to enjoy. With an audible smile and appreciative laugh he shares, "you see parents and big, brut(ish) dads tearing up about their memories. They would be crying, then I would be crying. There is such a sense of accomplishment."

MAKE TIME MATTER

A self-branded workaholic, Charles balances a full-time role as a show technician in UO's Day in the Park with Barney™ attraction with his part-time responsibilities as an entertainer. Never too busy to volunteer, Charles finds a way to make his time matter. "As blessed as I am, if I can squeeze it in, I do it."

He first heard of the GKtW opportunity through a work event, but personally decided to increase his involvement beyond the company program. "Once I log over 52 (UO program) hours, I really lose count for the rest of the year." In addition to his regular volunteering time, when Charles has an open evening, he willingly drives to the airport because he finds joy in welcoming GKtW families and making sure their week kicks-off with a fun and memorable start.

READY TO RESPOND

Living in central Florida and being a part of the UO family is a unique experience. The sun shines most days and there are many opportunities to create fun and exciting experiences. However, sometimes life, and more specifically Mother Nature, brings her own brand of excitement to the area. In the recent anticipation of Hurricane Irma, Charles was ready to respond.

He participated in a UO organized project to pack toiletry bags for area homeless and evacuation



Charles Crook



**Never too busy to volunteer,
Charles finds a way to make his
time matter.**

shelters. "I am surrounded by Team Members who volunteer." For Charles, "it is a small way to give back for all I have and all I have gained being in central Florida." It's no surprise that ahead of Hurricane Irma, Charles also selflessly helped move visiting families from the GKtW village to area resort properties, providing reinforced infrastructure and critical backup power – all prior to securing his own safety.



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Service Associate

CSAA Insurance Group, a AAA Insurer

Employee Since 2007



Jeremiah “Jerry” Rifareal is an active and passionate person, driven to connect with others and make a difference through volunteering. As a native Californian, Jerry loves the outdoors. So, when he heard about a Yosemite National Park cleanup trip through CSAA Insurance Group, he immediately signed up.

GOING OUTSIDE COMFORT ZONES

“We spend more time at work with each other than sometimes with our own families,” says Jerry. So, it wasn’t hard to imagine going on a weekend volunteering trip with some co-workers. This would be Jerry’s first experience camping outdoors and once he arrived at Yosemite, he really felt out of his element. This feeling didn’t last long because Jerry was taken under the wing of a now-close friend. “Special friendships are started from the events,” shares Jerry, “because it’s an environment where you’re outside of your comfort zone and you can’t help but become fast friends as a result of the experience.”

DRIVEN BY THE HUMAN ELEMENT

From this volunteering experience, Jerry's eyes opened and he started seeing CSAA Insurance Group not as just a place to work, but as an avenue to give back. The volunteer events take a job that's demanding and challenging, bond people together and provide Jerry with the confidence needed to be successful in his job. "You know you have someone you can count on because you've seen them outside of work, in action. It can be harder to develop that comradery just from emails or on the phone." These events bring out the best in people. "It's not about them; it's about giving back. We all are out there trying do something that people need to do."

CONNECTING WITH COLLEAGUES AND CUSTOMERS

A common obstacle to volunteering is that people don't know what to do or how to give back. Seeing this as an opportunity, Jerry started spreading the word and sharing volunteering opportunities through CSAA Insurance Group with his networks. Employees are welcome to invite family and friends to volunteer. "The things we do speak volumes to other people. We never know how much it will mean to someone."

Jerry recalls doing a beach cleanup event and having a police officer, who was a lifelong AAA Member, come up to them. "It made his day when he learned we were with AAA and it made me proud to know my customers were inspired in a whole different way." They were not only connected through AAA, but also as people who deeply care about their community.

If he had more time, Jerry would volunteer more, especially at Yosemite cleanups. "It feels like home to me." And it's about more than simply picking up garbage. "It shows that we care, and that we can keep such a beautiful place for everyone to enjoy."



"The things we do speak volumes to other people. We never know how much it will mean to someone."



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Ticket Seller, Main Entry

Team Member Since 2011

Admissions Host, Main Entry

Team Member Since 2006

Universal Studios Hollywood employees Lisa Dieguez and Jessica Rivera are inspiring women working together in their extraordinary universe to share a passion for community outreach. Together, they encourage fellow Team Members to impact the world around them.

INSPIRED BY THE PAST

Both Lisa and Jessica grew up in Hollywood, California. They both welcome guests as they arrive to Universal Studios Hollywood, both enjoy trying new restaurants, and actively give back to benefit the greater good. While these women share similarities, the inspiration behind their passions for service come from two distinctly different pasts.



For Jessica, community service has been a way of life since she was a child. Her mother was an active volunteer and her high school encouraged annual community service participation, instilling a strong sense of community from the start. For Lisa, her interest in volunteering developed as an adult. Reflecting back on her past, the challenges and struggles her family faced growing up now drive her dedication to help those in similar situations.

EMPOWERED BY THE PRESENT

Today, both women express gratitude for the opportunities to give back and participate in monthly community outreach programs offered by USH. "At first I did not realize how much Universal Studios Hollywood does in the community," said Lisa. This dedicated duo shared an overwhelming sense of pride in learning how much the company cares. "It makes me happy and proud to work at a company, knowing we do so much to make a difference." There are many events throughout the year, offering Universal Studios Hollywood employees many opportunities to get involved in different ways and times that fit their interests and schedules. "There are so many more charities you can get involved in than you realize."

MOTIVATING FOR THE FUTURE

"I feel so lucky that I can give back and I try to do so whenever I can," Jessica explains, with Lisa in agreement, adding, "Once I saw how involved our company has become, I started to devote more time to the events." While Universal Studios Hollywood outreach activities offer all employees opportunities to participate, Jessica and Lisa make it easy for everyone in their department to help out today, and look forward to motivating others to join in the future.

They established a calendar to communicate upcoming options, increasing awareness and recruiting others along the way. Recognizing not everyone can afford to donate time or money, they recruit volunteers in different ways. Sometimes they request donations of everyday items easily found around the house or they coordinate on-site opportunities with minimal impact on work schedules.

Lisa and Jessica are two women dedicated to community outreach and creating opportunities for others to share in the joy and experience of giving back. "Seeing the happiness of those receiving is warming; it makes you feel good to be a part of their smiles."

And both agree that if they could, they would volunteer even more than they do today.



Jessica Rivera
& Lisa Dieguez



"I feel so lucky that I can give back and I try to do so whenever I can."



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Deputy Director, Campus Venue Services

Princeton University

Employee for 12 Years

The mere notion of volunteering for most people is often a one-time event squeezed into an already-busy schedule. But for Marguerite Vera, volunteerism is just a way of life. A campus venue services deputy director for Princeton University, Vera's volunteer efforts are constant, generous, and without pretense.

SHOWING RESPECT FOR HUMANITY

Growing up, volunteering and civic engagement was a way of life. Marguerite grew up around family members who were always engaged in giving back. And she joined in at an early age. Today, Marguerite volunteers for numerous endeavors, including Meals on Wheels, serves on the Board for a local school, and even sings in her church choir. But her greatest passion is her work with Konekte Princeton Haiti.



The program coordinates volunteer trips to poverty-ridden Haiti each year: a country still reeling from a devastating earthquake. Every year, Marguerite spends 10 days in Haiti building and rebuilding homes and schools with very little tools or support. From shoveling rocks to building foundations, Marguerite and the team work for hours on end.

And when the work gets tiring? "I just look around me," she says. "Here in Haiti, children from age three to teens work tirelessly alongside us because they are so happy to see us help build the school."

"Respect for humanity is what guides my principles," says Marguerite. "I tend to see good in most people and I think people need to feel respected to give their best."

TEACHING THE ART OF GIVING

Volunteering isn't just in Marguerite's heart; it's in the hearts of her three daughters as well. Consciously choosing to model volunteerism, Marguerite raised her daughters to see the value of volunteering through practice. She's grateful not only to have had the opportunity to raise them this way, but to see them live their lives similarly.



As her daughters have grown, she's had more time herself to volunteer. But she also thrills in seeing their efforts and mentality around volunteerism - it's a part of their lives too.

"All of my children have and will continue to participate in community service in ways that will benefit society," Marguerite says.

PRIDE IN PRINCETON

Regardless of how many volunteer opportunities Marguerite has completed, she's most proud of her employer's willingness to sponsor, support, and encourage. The University holds community service days each January, getting the year off to a giving start. The activities vary from office to office, but everyone participates on behalf of the University.

Marguerite also appreciates the level of effort from the University's employee resource groups. Each one gives back to the campus and community regularly, and the University ensures the entire community knows how to get involved. The opportunities are endless and allow employees to make more impact than they can imagine.

Whether volunteering on her own, or, on behalf of Princeton, there's one thing that always holds true: Marguerite's admirably modest approach to service. "I don't want anything back for what I give," she says. "I do it because I get my own satisfaction for having done whatever I have done. If you give a gift, you've given it and there's no thanks necessary."

And that's a sentiment worth sharing.



Volunteering isn't just in Marguerite's heart; it's in the hearts of her three daughters as well.



Financial Analyst

Employee for 20+ Years

Office Assistant

Employee Since 1985

Known as the “Mission Ladies,” Sheila and Donya Merritt have been volunteering since they both were young. This empowered mother-daughter team and MNRN employees are constantly looking for ways to give back.

VOLUNTEERING IS A WAY OF LIFE

When it comes to volunteering, it’s definitely a family affair. Sheila has been volunteering for so long, companies now reach out to her because they know she’s sincere and personally committed to making a difference. Sheila’s friend coined the phrase, “There’s no shower like I’ll shower,” which stresses the importance of showering others with gifts and helping out.



KNOWN AS THE MISSION LADIES

The Merritt women are on a mission: to empower others who also want to give back. And their efforts are contagious. Known by their co-workers as genuine and caring, Sheila and Donya volunteer whenever and wherever they can, including at veterans' hospitals and local schools. They even have prior charitable recipients, who are now college students, actively giving back just because they received support at one point. At MNRN, if someone wants to help out within the community, they're just told to reach out to the Mission Ladies.

APPLYING EDUCATION TO FURTHER SUPPORT THE COMMUNITY

While working, both Donya and Sheila are continuing their education and looking for ways to apply their new skills in their community. Donya wants to use her business and finance degree, while Sheila wants to apply her nutrition and health knowledge.

Whether it's with the Fisher House Foundation or sponsoring an elementary school with a large population of homeless children, it's second nature to Sheila and Donya to give back. For them, it's the right thing to do. And as Sheila says, "It doesn't take anything to pass on something."

The Merritt women are on a mission: to empower others who also want to give back. And their efforts are contagious.



Donya and Sheila Merritt

MedStar National Rehabilitation Network



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Sales Representative

Universal Orlando Resort

Team Member Since 2002

Melissa Lanzo has a passion for people. It's an advantageous quality for a Universal Orlando Resort sales representative in the youth programs market. And as an active community volunteer, she is inspiring.

INFLUENCING THE FUTURE

In 2016, Melissa completed more than 120 hours of community service. So far in 2017, she's averaging five to six hours per week and is living her calling to volunteer and help. She recalls dedicating her time to teach kindergartners to read when she was a fifth grader, tutor and help with campus clean-up in middle school, and exceed the 24 hours of service goal each year as a high schooler. Today, Melissa maintains her focus on children, striving to provide whatever she can to help them grow and pursue their path. "You never know— your time and care may inspire them to become a doctor, lawyer or teacher someday. They are our future."



“Put community first and take care of people because they will take care of you.”

CONTINUING A LEGACY

What inspires Melissa's insatiable spirit of giving in her community? It's her parents and how she watched them with admiration as they actively gave back throughout her life. "They did not have much, but no matter what they had or did not have, they always gave."

She recalls knowing they would give their last sandwich or the T-shirt on their back to anyone in need. Melissa's parents taught her to put "community first and take care of people because they will take care of you." She knows this as truth, remembering a time her family was in need and how their community rallied: "everyone pitched in to support and help. They gave back to us." Melissa is proud of her parents, what they have achieved, and their dedication to giving and community. "They inspired me to be the same way. I want to continue their legacy."



COMPLETING THE CIRCLE

Volunteering is a priority for Melissa and everyone in her life knows it. While she is dedicated to making a difference, it is her influence on others that creates her full-circle of giving. She speaks with pride about Universal Orlando Resort (UO) and the many opportunities to give and volunteer available. "I love to see my fellow Team Members in purple shirts when they volunteer and ask them about their experience." Melissa is active in UO programs as well as outside of work. She often invites her friends to volunteer along with her: "In my circle of friends I am a motivator to get them to volunteer. Now many are volunteering on their own."

Melissa dedicates her time, energy and passion to making the world around her a better place. "With so much going on in the world, volunteering is an escape and seeing someone smile makes me happy. I know I am making a difference. This is why I am here."



Melissa Lanzo



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Claims Supervisor

CSAA Insurance Group, a AAA Insurer

Employee Since 2005

When she is not hiking or spoiling her two rescued dogs (a Westie and Miniature Schnauzer), Meg Kinney, a Colorado Springs, Colorado resident, spends her time giving back to those around her. In every way she can, like she's always done.

GIVING BACK IS THE WAY TO BE

One of nine kids, Meg grew up watching her parents give back to their community in Illinois. Her mother was a nurse and was always doing things in the neighborhood to help those in need. "Growing up, we always did a lot of community outreach at holiday times through our school," she shares. From volunteering with the Special Olympics to spending time with the elderly, giving back and helping others was part of Meg's childhood. "We were just taught to be that way."



TURNING TRAGEDY INTO A DRIVE TO VOLUNTEER

Two impactful experiences prompted Meg to get more involved with her local community. Years ago, while hiking with a friend, she ended up lost for more than 15 hours before being rescued by the El Paso County Search and Rescue Team. “We actually walked so far we weren’t even in El Paso County, but they still came and rescued us.”

Then in 2013, Meg lost her home and her dog in a fire. “We didn’t need anything; we had insurance,” she said, but the outpouring of support from strangers was incredible. “One lady just came up and hugged me on the street.” The kindness from strangers drove her to want to help others even more. Today, Meg is involved with CSAA Insurance Group’s community outreach efforts and serves as her office’s volunteer coordinator.

EMPOWERED TO INCLUDE EVERYONE AND EVERYTHING

Volunteering is an integral part of CSAA Insurance Group’s culture. 98% of employees volunteer through the company’s award-winning program which allows each employee 24 hours to get involved with nonprofits that align with their passion. Through the program, Meg’s volunteering efforts are far-reaching. While she has a soft spot in her heart for dogs, children and the elderly, she supports all types of volunteering efforts. Thankful

to the El Paso County Search and Rescue team, a volunteer-run charity, Meg started supporting them through bake sales, fundraiser breakfasts, and a charity art auction held by CSAA Insurance Group.

Whether it’s letting dogs get their “first taste of freedom” at the National Mill Dog Rescue (where she adopted her two dogs), stuffing bags for overseas military, helping at Restore (part of Habitat for

Humanity), or cleaning up trails, Meg not only coordinates all volunteer activities for her office of 500 CSAA employees; she also participates in them.

Volunteering was part of how Meg grew up and is a part of who she is. And at CSAA Insurance Group she is part of a community that works. “I’m kind of famous here for cookies,” she said.

Most recently, Meg baked more than 750 cookies for a fundraiser she called “Treats for Texas,”

which raised money to help people affected by Hurricane Harvey. Before she even walked through the door on the day of the bake sale, the fundraiser was dubbed a success as 600 cookies were already pre-ordered.

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Manager of Special Events Operations

Universal Studios Hollywood

Team Member Since 2008

Sondra Salas enjoys the opportunity to mix business with personal priority and passion. As the Manager of Special Events Operations at Universal Studios Hollywood, Sondra said, “I love that I am able to leverage my work experience into community outreach.”



ENGAGING EVENTS

When Sondra joined a work-sponsored event at the nonprofit Downtown Women's Center (DWC) in Los Angeles, California, she had no idea how much that moment would impact her life and so many others in her community. Initially thinking the event (posted to a company bulletin board) was a cooking club, she decided to sign up. There was overwhelming interest and Sondra soon learned all the Universal spots were full. So, she decided to reach out directly and volunteer.





Today, Sondra continues to donate her time, balancing her Universal career with the volunteering she does at the DWC. As Center leaders learned about her event planning experience, they asked if she would like to expand her role in volunteering and join the DWC birthday guild. After four years of helping to host monthly birthday parties for the ladies of the DWC, Sondra was again approached to embark on a new adventure. Now a Chair for a program called the Whole Women's Saturdays, she was leading monthly events focused on connecting women interested in topics based on five core themes: mind, body, soul, money and community.

The Universal Studios Hollywood management team soon learned about Sondra's DWC program leadership and wanted to embrace her efforts. Because one of Universal Studios Hollywood's core values is to "do the right thing," Sondra added, "I am so proud to work for a company that supports local organizations that empower individuals and families to lead more fulfilling lives. Without the grant from the Universal Discover a Star Foundation, the program would not be possible."

FOCUSING ON FAMILY

Volunteering is very personal for me," shares Sondra. It is also a family affair. She and her husband participate in Universal Studios Hollywood's Adopt-a-Family program during the holiday season. They also share their time volunteering outside of this program. When Sondra and her husband came across the profile of a single mom with a young son, the couple decided to create a memorable Christmas for them. The support turned into friendship, and one season became a few, which then became an annual tradition. Over the years, the mother and her 14-year-old son have become an extension of Sondra's family. "We get together

on holidays and connect over the summer, and my husband is there to make sure her son is ready, and supported with life and school."

PRIORITIZING PHILANTHROPY

Sondra is a big believer in volunteering. "Prioritizing my time helps makes it happen," she says. While time-consuming, her work at the DWC is a priority. She talks about the Saturday commitments (and admits there are weekends

"I believe we are all connected and serving others is a responsibility of being on this planet."

she would rather sleep in or sip coffee and relax) but, says "I prioritize. I know why I am doing it—and I make it happen, and it makes me happy to know I am making a difference."

Prior to her work at the DWC, Sondra was an active volunteer with AIDS Project Los Angeles and MEND, both local food banks; L.A. Works, a volunteer action center; and the Susan G. Komen and Avon walks for breast cancer awareness.

One of her roles in life is to be a connector. "I believe we are all connected and serving others is a responsibility we have just by virtue of being on this planet."



Sondra Salas



#EBGivesBack



YOUR BRAND

Giving back and celebrating those in your organization who do can have a powerful effect on your employer brand. It shows that your organization cares about the community where you live and work. It demonstrates your commitment to candidates who are increasingly looking for organizations who care about more than just the bottom line.

Here are some recommendations to help you elevate your employer brand while doing good for others:

Make giving back a part of your brand

1

Host an annual volunteering day with events and activities, both inside and outside of the office. Track team and individual efforts throughout the day and showcase successes at the end.

2

Match a percentage of employee donations to charities of their choice. Promote donations through career social media channels.

3

Add a volunteering page to your career site to showcase employees' involvement and the organization's commitment.

4

Interview employees at volunteer activities and share their testimonials in recruitment marketing materials.

5

Develop a hashtag for company-specific volunteer activities. Teach employees how to use it via social media when participating in these activities.

6

Take photos and videos of employees (with approval of course) volunteering and spotlight them throughout the year internally and externally.

7

Encourage employees to "bring a friend" to volunteer events to help spread the word about your organization's efforts to give back.

8

If giving back is an essential part of your employer brand, include volunteer-related questions in your interview guides to help hire best-fit candidates who will thrive in your culture.

9

Award and recognize those employees who go above and beyond to give back through both internal and external channels.

10

Offer paid volunteer time off as a benefit for employees to use throughout the year.

Have other recommendations for how giving back can benefit your employer brand? Share with us on social media by using the hashtag [#EBGivesBack](#).

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ABOUT EXAQUEO

If you're authentic, you have no competition

We're exaqueo (ex ACK 'we o). We build employer brands and the talent strategies that drive them through research, consulting, and creative and digital execution. We help clients build strategies first and then execute through internal and external campaigns, creative, communication and technology.

If you've liked what you've seen here and want a full-service employer brand partner who can conduct research, build your employer brand, align your talent strategy, and execute exceptional creative and digital assets, **let's talk**.

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