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Good Deeds Well Done (Conclusion)

TIM BURKE | February 9, 2017

Dry cleaners connect with customers to stay involved in local communities

CHICAGO — Good-Deed-Doers, we!

Dry cleaners get involved in their local communities and give back. That is undeniable.

About charitable deeds, Tom Zengeler, president of Libertyville, Ill.-based Zengeler Cleaners, says, “These efforts are driven by our shared belief that it’s important to support the communities we serve, not to get publicity or a ‘pat on the back’ because of the things



Good Deeds! Drycleaning owners bring so many positives with their charitable works; giving back to their communities is its own reward.

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Zengeler, who heads one of America's oldest drycleaning companies, says, "The best way to find opportunities is to listen to your customers.

"For example, we learned about the Glass Slipper Project (helps young women enjoy the special occasion of prom, collecting donations from those who no longer need their dresses and prom night accessories) from one of their volunteers who also was one of our customers," he notes. "She approached us with a request to provide some support. So many years on, this effort has blossomed into a huge event."

The Glass Slipper Project in Chicago, since 1999, has collected used prom dresses, shoes and accessories. The program provides high school senior girls in the Chicagoland area who cannot afford a prom dress an opportunity to acquire prom apparel and attend their senior prom.

To get the word out and promote the worthy cause, Zengeler suggests placing marquee signs out front and in-store, posting information on the company website, and sending

we do."

"Finding a charity that is locally relevant is important," says Todd Ofsink, who has owned New York City-based Todd Layne Cleaners since 2006.

"With homelessness increasing in recent years in New York City, we feel that it is important to keep the less fortunate clothed and clean to increase their employability," says the certified business analyst and coach. His operation offers 100% eco-friendly dry cleaning, mainly to the millennial market through app, website, e-mail or text.

"Donating to charities that are locally important will also show customers that you care about the well-being of the community," he notes.

His operation donates regularly to the Stephen Wise Freedom Synagogue Next Step Homeless Shelter, which helps homeless men who are in a transition period to get back onto their feet. The shelter provides them with food and a warm, safe environment.

ing the charity your operation is involved in can effectively get the word out and give clients opportunity to donate.

are many ways to get in contact with customers about charities," Ofsink says. "Mentioning it on your website, e-mailing customers about it, creating in-store signs can all get the word out. Going into detail about what exactly the charity does will get people on board and encourage them to

press releases to newspapers and radio stations.

“From time to time, we've also informed customers about the Glass Slipper Project through our regular e-mail campaigns,” he says.

“In speaking with other independent cleaners, most of us make significant contributions to the community through donations, sponsorships, youth programs or efforts like our support for the Glass Slipper Project.”

CARE, SHARE

Efforts in charitable deeds are made by individuals across the industry, and in so many ways.

Harry Kimmel, communications director for the Drycleaning & Laundry Institute since 2011, says, “DLI staff has participated in Toys for Tots every year since I joined the staff. We're proud to share some joy with people in need during the holiday season.

“Though the giving is companywide, it's mostly on the personal level, and we recognize that every contribution counts.”

Regarding the association's members, he says, “On the community scale, our members do so much. When I read about just one member collecting, cleaning and distributing tens of thousands of coats for kids each year, it warms my heart.

“When we put it all together and see the sheer volume of projects our members undertake each year, it's simply amazing.” Some cleaners were involved in 10 or more annual projects, he adds.

The way in which cleaners do good works for their communities can also be shared so that more cleaners learn how to reach out and give.

“Our member dry cleaners are extremely generous,” says Kimmel. “We wanted to take their creative energy and share it. We designed the DLI Cleaners Care project to spotlight member cleaner efforts to improve their communities by sharing success.”

DLI set up the Cleaners Care registry “to share the mix of ideas we were seeing,” he says. “If a cleaner is interested in charitable giving, I'd recommend they start by looking at what their fellow DLI members are doing first.”

Good works for the community means getting involved and getting others (friends, family, co-workers, clients) involved, too. Along the way comes good hearts and the strong feelings created by goodwill.

“In 2002, I wrote my first article about DLI members giving to charitable causes,” Kimmel says. “I am still taken by the creativity and ingenuity members bring to their giving. Our members are the friends and neighbors who provide these services to their communities, and that really stayed with me all these years.”

Ofsink would like to see more dry cleaners work together for a common cause, such as clothing drives, or for organizations that fight disease or poverty. “For customers, knowing that their patronage of our business is making a difference in the city helps create a strong community and builds loyalty,” he says.

Regarding helping out a local no-kill animal shelter, Dave Beatty, DLI president, and the owner of Murrysville (Pa.) Cleaners for more than 30 years, points out, “We were not expecting some of the people to come in and thank us for helping them deal with the loss of their pets.

“They had saved items after they passed away and were happy to see them going to such a good cause and help give them some closure. We got to see a lot of their pets’ pictures and it was really nice to know that people appreciated what we were doing. This will now be an annual event for us!”

“Mothers are happy when they see we help the sports team in their school with something as simple as washing their uniform or helping them buy them with money raised from our customers,” adds Salomon Mishaan, president of Hollywood, Fla.-based OXXO Care Cleaners, a drycleaning franchise that has a presence in more than 40 U.S. cities and is active in many charities.

“We do not do charitable deeds for the purpose of self-promotion,” says Buddy Gritz, owner of Presto Valet of Virginia Inc., in Alexandria. “We prefer to generate community goodwill and let positive word of mouth reap its own rewards.”

Zengeler sums up the feeling of the day: “Keep your eyes and ears open for opportunities throughout your community, then find something that is important to you and will resonate with your customers,” he notes. “There are plenty of worthy causes available in every community.”

There’s no limit on caring. Your big heart helps so many. Keep doing what you do.

To read Part 1, go [HERE](#).

About the author



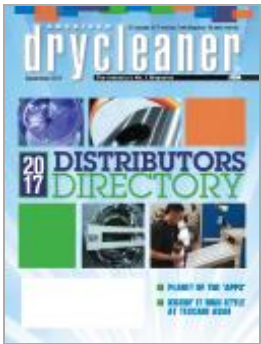
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