



OpEd: Corporate community service must be lifted up

By Jim Huston

Businesses are uniquely qualified and structured to meet the needs of the market. Those needs are generally fulfilled by making a product or producing a service. So we must make a concerted effort to applaud community partners like Eli Lilly and Co., that make an active choice to positively impact Indiana outside of their for-profit operations.

Just a couple weeks ago, Lilly embodied this by providing an army of 8,000 red-shirted volunteers who reached out to improve Indiana communities with a “Global Day of Service” – and this is only one of many such examples where their corporate culture is giving generously. Lilly has long been a supporter of highlighting the good works of Hoosiers and providing a forum for volunteers, volunteer managers, and others involved with advancing community service. As in years past, Lilly has also sponsored the 2011 Governor’s Conference on Service and Volunteerism.

Corporate sponsorship strengthened the forum this conference provides for Indiana’s volunteer coordinators, national service members, service-learning participants, and organizations, where these community servants could engage in meaningful dialogue, exchange best practices, receive training, establish partnerships, and celebrate accomplishments.

It was the generosity of corporations like Lilly that enabled organizers, attendees, and other participants to celebrate the spirit of service found in the remarkable works of these 2011 Governor’s Service Award recipients:

- Nicholas Tannenbaum of Indianapolis –honored for Youth Service. Tannenbaum, a student at Park Tudor school, gave his time and talent teaching tennis to children affected by Down syndrome.
- Cathy Lenoir of South Bend – honored for National Service. Lenoir worked her way from poverty and homelessness into helping others make their own transition into sustainability.
- Tavetta Patterson of Gary – honored for Volunteerism. Patterson, whose faith-inspired words and passion gave conference attendees an idea of how she has reached over 5,000 students and parents of northwest Indiana, helped community-members so they

may grasp the hope they have in breaking generational poverty and attending college.

- Georgiann Leonard of Vincennes – honored for Lifetime Achievement. Leonard, befitting her community work over decades of service, has a résumé of volunteerism so extensive it wouldn't do it justice to try to fit it in one paragraph.
- Mario Bustos of Valparaiso – honored for Faith-Based Service. He ventured beyond the boundaries of denomination and faith-group to establish a system of help for people in need of shelter and transition out of dependency.
- Julie Bonahoom of Indianapolis – honored with her IU Nursing class for Communities of Service. Their program facilitated career exploration and mentorship, as they partnered with Girls, Inc.
- Professor Marisel Moreno South Bend –honored for Service Learning. Professor Moreno and her Notre Dame students used their curriculum to help teach and transcend language barriers.

Each of these individuals and programs serve in extraordinary ways.

So we must remember that, at its core, corporate community service is defined by a business' employees and affiliates who give just like those honored above. Now more than ever, we must encourage and lift up efforts of these Hoosiers who made an active choice to set aside time talent and resources from for-profit activity or made a personal sacrifice, to meet their community's needs.

On behalf of the Office of Faith Based and Community Initiatives, I say thank you to the award winners, corporate leaders, and the thousands like them that serve and volunteer on a daily basis.

Huston is the Executive Director for the Indiana Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (OFBCI), which works to CONNECT organizations and communities to grants, services, and each other; PROMOTE volunteerism and service to improve the lives of Hoosiers; ENCOURAGE public and private resources to seed and sustain innovative and high quality community and faith-based initiatives; and, HIGHLIGHT the good works of individuals and their communities with best practices and innovative models.

To learn more about the OFBCI, please visit www.in.gov/ofbci.