TRISURA GUARANTEE INSURANCE COMPANY

Helping those in need is a central corporate value

Project Water is the latest charitable cause undertaken by the people at Trisura Guarantee Insurance Company. It’s an initiative first started 15 years ago, but it continues to fit comfortably into the insurer’s corporate culture of helping people.

“One of our central values at Trisura is giving back,” says Wendy D’Angelo, human resources advisor and a member of Trisura’s charitable giving committee. “We donate one per cent of our net underwriting income to charities – $58,094 last year. Our culture of giving and participation starts from the top down.”

The top-down involvement was demonstrated last November by Trisura president and CEO Mike George, who spent a night on the street as part of the executive edition of Covenant House’s Sleep Out event. He was among several business leaders who bedded down in a Toronto alley to raise awareness and funds for programs and shelter for homeless youth. The executives were provided with only a sleeping bag and a piece of cardboard to sleep on. George raised $23,000 in charitable pledges for Covenant House Toronto.

“We’re seeing more organizations taking on charitable events,” says Sandra Henkel, Trisura’s VP strategic initiatives. “Employees care about what's happening in the community and contributing to community causes. It’s important to our employees, and obviously that means it’s important to the company.”

This year, Project Water, a one-day event, was held July 9. Over 100 volunteers from organizations across Metro Toronto joined the cause. For the first time, 10 volunteers from Trisura took part, helping load donated bottled water into vehicles for distribution to those in need, such as the homeless. The water is distributed during heat alerts.

“According to the Project Water Charity, more homeless people die from dehydration during the summer than from exposure to frigid temperatures in the winter,” says D’Angelo. “The effects of heat exposure and dehydration on people who have pre-existing conditions can be severe. Project Water was founded in response to this need.”

The Trisura team helped pack summer survival kits comprised of a T-shirt, reusable water bottle, pen, note pad, baseball cap, hand sanitizer and body lotion. All teams competed to see which could put together the most kits. Trisura employees won handily, assembling 1,100 kits in 20 minutes. In total, more than 3,000 survival kits were packed and loaded.

Since its inception, Project Water has placed more than 1.5 million bottles of water into the hands of Toronto and area homeless people through 170 relief organizations and homeless shelters.

Another first this year for Trisura is involvement with Habitat for Humanity. Just like Project Water, D’Angelo says the company sends 10 volunteers for a day and provides $3,000 in funding for the cause.

“We started with 10 people, but we’re really hoping to grow over time with Habitat — larger events and more people. To start with, while Habitat waits for building permits, we go into their warehouse and start framing walls. When the permits come through, those walls will go into new homes.”

D’Angelo says there was a lot of interest in the Habitat project among employees. Twenty staffers applied to help out.

Ten Trisura volunteers were involved recently in the Toronto-area Project Water, which distributed survival kits, including bottled water, to those in need. In southern Ontario, more homeless people die from dehydration in the summer than from exposure to low temperatures in the winter months.
Trisura’s annual softball tournament is also a sure way to raise funds. Fourteen teams registered for this year’s tournament, which included Trisura employees and broker partners. Caitlin Wall, marketing communications co-ordinator, says four baseball diamonds were rented to accommodate about 200 people.

“The tournament gets bigger every year,” Wall says. “We also do a raffle at the event to raise even more money.”

In 2012 the tournament netted $6,000, which went to an organization called Waves of Hope in Nicaragua, which was started by a former Trisura employee. Last year the tourney raised $10,000 for The Darling Home for Kids in Milton, Ont.

The focus in 2014 is on Just4kics, an organization helping underprivileged young people play a community sport or get involved in a recreational activity. Funds are directed toward new or used equipment, registration fees and some travel costs.

Other events supported by Trisura and its employees include various United Way fundraising events. In 2013 the insurer raised $30,500 for United Way with 100 per cent employee participation. The company also sponsors a team in the Scotiabank Rat Race, which supports the United Way, and in the annual Ride for Juvenile Diabetes.

Trisura has 90 full-time employees across the country, 58 at head office in Toronto. The company provides each employee with two paid volunteer days a year to contribute time to a qualified and registered charity.

---

From the September 2014 edition of InsurancePeople