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Community service from a NEWiRE perspective

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Many of us work in businesses that have official corporate social responsibility policies. While everyone has their own definition, The World Business Council for Sustainable Development defines it as "the continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at large." Wow! That sounds complicated, doesn't it?

At NEWiRE, we prefer to take a simpler, more personal approach. Community outreach is an integral part of our organization. Our Community Involvement Committee (CIC) gives members the opportunity to help a range of non-profit organizations. The group is dedicated to hands-on community service geared toward women and children in need.

We recognize that our members may already work for employers with some kind of corporate social responsibility policy. However, as an organization that helps advance the careers of women in commercial real estate, our approach to philanthropy is two-fold. First, it complements our other efforts to help develop more well-rounded professionals. Second, as an organization of women, it gives us a chance to unite and make a difference in meaningful ways.

For example, on April 10th, NEWiRE members participated in a Day of Service with other Boston commercial real estate organizations that included NAIOP, ULI, SMPS, BSA, AAREP and CoreNet Global at The Giving Factory/Cradles to Crayons. This was an opportunity for the greater Boston commercial real estate community to come together to support a worthy cause. Participants devoted an afternoon to helping sort, organize and package donated clothing and children's items at Cradles to Crayons' warehouse in Brighton.

Cradles to Crayons has a vision that one day every child will have the essentials they need to feel safe, warm, ready to learn and valued. They collect high-quality used/new items, specifically clothing, shoes, books, school supplies and toys. Once these items are organized and packaged, they are then passed on to communities that are in desperate need of resources for homeless and low-income children ages 0 to 12 (free of charge). Overall, the day was extremely productive with approximately 150 volunteers that made an impact in the lives of 1,262 children. That's what we call giving back.

The CIC regularly organizes clothing, Mother's Day and Baby Shower drives to collect much needed necessities and "extras" to enrich the lives of families in shelters. Our Holiday Shopping Party is a fun event in December that benefits a non-profit organization each year. Further, we are deeply committed to the Sancta Maria House (SMH), a 10-bed overnight shelter for homeless women located in Boston's South End. These initiatives are just a few examples of our outreach.

In the words of Patricia Cooper of Harvard University (who recently received the Suzanne King Public Service Award at the NEWiRE Achievement Awards for devoting her time and talent to strengthening the community through effective action and leadership), "small acts shouldn't be

confused with insignificant acts" when it comes to giving. I couldn't agree more!

When we can positively affect change in another person's life, it changes us as individuals. Outside of work and our families, it makes us more aware of our role in society. At NEWiRE, community service isn't about policy. It's how we gain perspective and build character.

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