

gets there – thus reducing the overall footprint of the event.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

Steve Barry, president and CEO of TWI Group – a freight logistics company that specializes in trade shows – has always found it rewarding to volunteer his time to church activities. So it only made sense for him to extend this reward to TWI's employees and get them involved in volunteer activities that will also help them grow as people.

"It is really just about trying to take some of the focus off of the hard work we do every day and looking at other things," he said. "It is not just all about work. There is a much bigger picture in this world than just moving boxes and taking care of customers."

As a result of Barry's commitment to the community, the company became involved in a local food drive about eight years ago. In addition, he arranged for all of his employees to volunteer four hours of their time to Habitat for Humanity during the company's annual meeting. This event was so popular that TWI is looking to create a formal employee volunteer program that will reimburse them for their time as they do good works.

KEEPING THE INDUSTRY ALIVE

Helen Brett, founder of Helen Brett Enterprises and the first female independent trade show manager, wanted to create a legacy by giving back to the industry that she loved. To respect her wishes, Robert Brett Kolinek, the company's president and Brett's grandson, set up the Helen Brett Scholarship to help young people interested in the industry to continue their education.

The company also offers a hands-on education to younger students – from 14 to 18 years old – to help cultivate a new generation of trade show workers. Kolinek says this outreach is important because usually college students usually have firm ideas about their career paths, whereas high schoolers

are still flexible enough to be open to new ideas. In order to plant the idea of a trade show career into these teen's minds, Helen Brett Enterprises offers a work study program that allows students to experience the trade show industry first hand. Through the program, students speak to local retailers about participating in the company's show, as well as work with exhibitors on the floor during the event.

As someone who grew up attending trade shows as a child, Kolinek feels this is an important way to get the younger generations interested in the industry – something that you do not see as much anymore in the business.

"Anything that you can do to promote education and growth in the industry is the most important thing because our industry is shrinking. At one time, the whole industry was built on the influx of young people coming in," he said. "About 25 years ago, the industry got into this whole theory that we were not going to let anybody into a show until they were at least 18 years old. Consequently, this has now caught up with us and the industry is suffering from a generation gap where we are not getting young entrepreneurs or young people involved in the business, and that is a difficult scenario."

CREATING A CULTURE OF GIVING

If a company wants to incorporate giving into its culture, a good place to start is with employees. Find out what issues they are interested in and passionate about. Chances are they may already be involved in community activities, or at least have a desire to give their time to the causes that are important to them.

"Typically, there are going to be some employees in your organization who have a passion for something – whether it is homelessness or children's issues or another cause," noted Freeman-Parsons. "When you find out what your employees believe in, you can then get them to make it a grassroots effort where they are really rallying behind it and getting others interested." 