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WESTER COUNTY



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A Cause in the Community

COIT Cleaning Services dedicates itself to corporate social responsibility. by LIZ HUNTER

In today's culture, to do well as a business also means you should do some good. Giving back to the community in which you live and work, known as corporate social responsibility (CSR), is something that is increasingly becoming expected by customers and the community.

COIT South Jersey Cleaning & Restoration is one company in our region that has embraced this initiative.

COIT's owner Lori Topiel says, "Striving to be a good corporate citizen is voluntary and sometimes costly, but it's just good business. As consumer awareness about social issues continues to grow, so does the importance these customers place on CSR when choosing where to spend their money."

Topiel believes this is something businesses need to embrace in order to succeed not just in the bottom line, but, in the minds of their customers and employees. "Having a socially good culture let's employees know they are working for something bigger than themselves, that their job is more than one-dimensional," she says. "It shows my technicians and customers that we care about our community including our pets."

For the past five years, one of the organizations close to Topiel's heart has been the Animal Welfare Association (AWA). The AWA is a private, nonprofit, no-kill organization that has been an important part of South Jersey for nearly 70 years. The AWA provides rescue, shelter and adoption to nearly 2,000 pets annually, and Topiel has fostered and adopted several of those dogs and cats herself.

The AWA, under the direction of executive director Maya Richmond, has developed successful corporate sponsorships and community programs to capture the benefits. "Partnering with the AWA has been easy.



Maria Clarke, AWA director of events, business & communication, is great to work with. She has so much positive energy and is very clear with what she needs from us."

The AWA is in the process of a three-phase expansion, which included the opening of a pet clinic in 2013, providing expanded veterinary services to help many more pets that may never have seen a veterinarian in the past. Moving forward to address AWA's antiquated animal shelter requires the charity to secure \$3 million, a task that can be difficult for a local charity that provides more in services than it takes in annually in donations. Knowing that they have an organization like COIT helping out in any way possible makes a difference for AWA.

"Lori believes in corporate and social responsibility, and she and Nicole [White] have been phenomenal," says Richmond. "You can see that they truly care for something, it's in the company's belief system. The relationship we've developed with COIT is so meaningful to us."

Topiel has donated COIT services to the AWA, helping to clean their air ducts, dryer vents and floors on a regular basis, and has organized fundraisers and supply drives as well. She has also helped offset the costs of some marketing and advertising

for the AWA, helping to promote them whenever she can in her ads.

"She's a powerhouse in that respect," says Richmond. "Lori is like a spokesperson for us. She's got a big heart and I believe that's why her clients stay loyal."

But support for a nonprofit doesn't always need to be monetary, says Richmond. "Support can come in the form of providing a service. We want to make it easy for companies to get involved," she says. "We don't want to create more work for your company, so we have a conversation about our needs and if there are things you can provide for us."

Another way is to hold a supply drive for items the AWA (or any charity) might need. "Everyone wants to give items, and there are certain ones we need but never get, like cat litter. We go through that quickly, but it rarely gets donated. Bleach is another item," says Richmond. "Targeted drives for those types of things truly help."

Manpower is always in short supply, she adds. "Companies might be interested in arranging a day of service, or volunteering at one of our fundraising events. There is a lot involved with setting up banners, registration and things like that," Richmond says. "These are just a few tangible, non-monetary ways of helping."

No matter how businesses support an organization like the AWA, it's important to remember the local impact it's making. **LW**



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