

BUILDING FOR GOOD

The Discovery Land Company Foundation focuses on the health and welfare of children.



NINE YEARS AGO, the Discovery Land Company established a foundation to improve the lives of disadvantaged children and youth around the world, particularly those living near Discovery's communities. At the helm is director Christy Nichols, who has overseen the organization's growth year after year, both in donations and results.

"It's all about the 'building' we are doing—building structures, programs, and communication with the charities," says Nichols, who notes that the impact of the Discovery Land Company Foundation (DLCF) is greater than ever.

When state funding stopped for one



Christy Nichols and Hunter Meldman visit SafeHouse of the Desert, where a sunny mosaic suggests a message of caring. Children battling leukemia (left), accompanied by their mothers, receive care at Amigos de los Niños.



of the homes at the Children's Village, a children's shelter and foster-care home in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, DLCF donated the charity's entire budget to keep the building in operation in 2015 and 2016, including the costs to cover insurance, food, remodeling, and wages for the round-the-clock staff.

Last year, DLCF covered the majority of construction and medical-equipment expenses for a permanent facility in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, for Amigos de los Niños, a children's clinic that offers free ear, nose, throat, and eye treatments; dental care; and medicine and support for chronically ill children. Previously, clinics and operations were limited to borrowed and rented locations once a year. With the new structure, Amigos de los Niños will be able to help many more

children, offer additional types of assistance, provide space for more physicians, and host clinics more frequently.

DLCF also funded much of the recent construction and programming at Harrison House, which is part of SafeHouse of the Desert, a California organization that has helped thousands of at-risk homeless and foster youth transition out of the foster-care system by providing mentors who teach them valuable life skills.

All told, the Foundation has contributed nearly \$890,000 to these three charities alone, and recently donated the first installment of a three-year, \$200,000 pledge to help develop programming and build a brand-new facility for the Boys & Girls Club in Coeur d'Alene.

Nichols attributes DLCF's success to the generosity of donors and the careful selection of charities to support, based on trust, good communication, demonstrated need, and a record of accountability and results.

"Our donations have had exponential results because these charities have used the funds to do what they said they were going to do—and then they have done even more on their own," Nichols says. "In building a foundation, this trust is essential. Our members and friends have been incredibly generous, and they see the focus and results of the donations, which strengthens their trust in DLCF."

DLCF gradually increases funding each year for organizations that are of great benefit to their communities. At the Children's Village, staff members go the extra mile (literally, in some cases) to do what's in the children's best interest: For example, children are driven to their original schools, even if the schools are out of the shelter's district. "They have beautiful rooms and an open kitchen, and the women who work there are more like extended family," Nichols says. "The day I first visited, two brothers arrived—a toddler and an infant, completely inexpressive. The 8-month-old had a birth defect, and the Children's Village arranged corrective surgery for him. Several years later, they are the first kids to come up and say hello. They have been socialized with so much love and care."

At Amigos de los Niños, DLCF began with a \$10,000 donation for medical supplies and rental fees. "Some of the infections [prior to being seen at the clinic] were so chronic that children had gone deaf, so



Mark Human and Jay Beckman of El Dorado join Gay Thatcher at the opening of the Amigos de los Niños clinic in Los Cabos. Children's Village residents (opposite top) tend the shelter's garden. At the Harrison House residential facility (opposite bottom), youth receive mentoring and vocational planning assistance.

the clinic started providing hearing aids," Nichols says. As the need for services grew, DLCF considered the clinic's business plan and budget for a permanent facility and sent Discovery Land Company staff to tour the proposed site and look at engineering plans. "Without the Discovery Land Company Foundation, we would never have been able to do this," adds Amigos de los Niños director Gay Thatcher.

The initial DLCF donation to SafeHouse in 2008 supplied half the annual food budget—a fraction of the recent \$150,000 contribution that went into building its new structure, Harrison House. "But they

had everything in place to earn this donation," Nichols says, citing more mentors than residents, support from the state of California, and an initiative requiring youth to participate in hands-on programs where they learn life skills, including how to find employment, lease an apartment, open a checking account, get a driver's license, and budget for groceries.

"The individual success stories inspire me to continue expanding these growth opportunities for children," Nichols says. "Although it's sad that the need is there, it's great that we can provide some of the solutions." —JENNIFER WANG