

GENEROSITY AND CARE

The Discovery Land Company Foundation continues to extend its reach.



FOLLOWING THE FORMATION of the Discovery Land Company Foundation in 2007, Director Christy Nichols traveled to each of the company's communities with two objectives: to educate the staff about the Foundation's mission to help children in need and to meet with local charities.

Nichols visited promising organizations to discuss their biggest needs from a grass-roots perspective. "We took the time to learn about the communities and get to know them first before we began raising or donating funds—being careful not to make mistakes," she says.

At the Children's Village in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, Nichols discovered that, at one time, the government funded only one- to two-month stays for children; after that, the kids were sent to foster care or sometimes back to negligent or abusive home environments. "Prior to the Foundation's support, one girl missed graduating from high school because she was sent to a foster home out of her school district,"

Bring on the backpacks: Baker's Bay employee Bobby Elder and his children (above) hand out supplies donated by DLCF to Bahamian schoolkids. A meeting with a young Children's Village resident (below) inspired a relationship and subsequent donations to the nonprofit group in Idaho.



Nichols says. "I had some candid conversations with the director, and said, 'Please don't send any kids away. We will step in with the funding to help you keep kids here as long as they need to stay.' Since then we

have seen several siblings stay together and receive wonderful care at the Children's Village for years."

Compared with other nonprofits, the Foundation stands out in a number of ways. DLCF has given away \$5.5 million to approximately 100 charities, which is significant because that amount represents up to half its assets annually—far more than the 5 percent nonprofits are required to give away.

Moreover, the Foundation's relationships with select charities have grown significantly. "If we were angel investors, you might say we make good investments, because we pay attention to how our donations are used and to the employees making those decisions," Nichols says. Donations usually begin with small sums, but when an organization demonstrates it can make a real impact with those funds, the Foundation is quick to contribute more. Donations to the Children's Village, for example, have increased from \$3,000 initially to \$300,000 in each of the past two years. The latest contributions have funded the opening of a second shelter facility and new programming.

Another way the Foundation has evolved is by finding new charities and initiatives through staff suggestions. This past year, an employee and his family at Baker's Bay Golf & Ocean Club in the Bahamas wanted to organize a backpack drive for a public school, so the Foundation paid for 1,000 backpacks and supplies for students, while staff volunteers organized the event to distribute them. The plan is to expand the program to reach even more children in 2017.

The Foundation's annual charity golf tournament gets bigger and better every year, too. The event garners between \$900,000 and \$1.3 million for SafeHouse of the Desert, a California residential facility for homeless and foster children; HOPE Farm, Inc., which provides positive role models for boys in Texas; and Love146, an organization that works to combat child sex trafficking and exploitation. With donations to SafeHouse, the Foundation has underwritten most of a new apartment building called Harrison



House, where residents aging out of foster care are mentored in life skills.

None of this, Nichols is quick to point out, would be possible without Discovery's generous members. "It's \$10,000 a player to participate in the golf tournament, and a lot of people send donations even when they can't attend, because they know the Foundation, and they know Mike [Meldman]. They trust us."

That generosity is especially evident following a crisis. After Hurricane Matthew hit the Bahamas last October, the general manager of Baker's Bay sent a single e-mail announcing a disaster-relief fund and raised \$150,000 to help local families. "We got donations from everywhere," Nichols says. "We made no calls, nor gave any public recognition to donors. It just shows how members' hearts are into helping."

Recently, Life Pursuits has become a larger part of the Foundation's overall mission.

Headed by Hunter Meldman, the program offers sports and other extracurricular activities to kids who need better access to them, while mentoring the youth. Hunter is himself a volunteer lacrosse coach for a Long Island youth team.

As Discovery continues to develop new projects, the Foundation's footprint will grow. "Our mission to enrich the communities that surround our developments is continually realized as Discovery Land Company has grown and expanded into more locations," says founder and CEO Mike Meldman. "As our member base increases at each of these properties, generous donations to the Foundation allow us to provide more support to children and families and add value in the surrounding communities."

Meanwhile Nichols remains proud of the Foundation's unwavering commitment to making a real impact. "We go one step beyond and make it personal," she says. "It

Mike Meldman and Ben Crane join PGA Tour pros (top) this year at The Madison Club for the annual DLCF tournament, where Christy Nichols and her sons, Hunter and Will (below), enjoyed a photo op a few years ago. Hunter Meldman celebrates the Life Pursuits-funded playground installed at Every Child Counts with the Abaco nonprofit's founder (left).



really is the heart of our work, because if you don't learn the stories, how can you really help?" Nichols recalls her first visit to Children's Village, where she met two young brothers who'd been removed from a destructive home environment. Thanks to Foundation funding, and thorough care at the Children's Village, Nichols has seen the boys grow into happy and healthy children.

A similar story surrounds a trio of siblings who have lived several years at the Children's Village with assistance from the private placement funding from DLCF. The fairy-tale ending? Last year they were adopted. —JENNIFER WANG