

CLOUD SECURITY • BUSINESS THEATER IN BELLEVUE • POINT INSIDE • STARTUP RESOURCES

425 Business

TOP GIVERS



"WE HAVE
A MORAL OBLIGATION
TO GIVE BACK."

— Roger & Nancy MacPherson
MacPherson Construction

+ 20 NONPROFITS
WORTHY
OF SUPPORT

Eastside businesses embody
the new era of philanthropy
by offering more than cash

\$4.95 DECEMBER 2014



425BUSINESS.COM



THE GIVING COMPANIES

Every year as the holiday season rolls around, focus turns to charitable giving and philanthropy. We looked across the Eastside and selected eight companies that focus on charitable contributions, whether it originates from the corporate office, a sister foundation, or from the employees themselves. With emphases on education, human health services, and help for needy children, these companies have made an impact in local communities and across the globe.

BY MARJORIE CLARK, DANA NEUTS, AND ADAM WORCESTER
PHOTOS BY RACHEL COWARD AND JESSE ROGERS



MACPHERSON CONSTRUCTION GIVING STARTED ON DAY ONE

Thirty years. That's how long Roger and Nancy MacPherson have been giving back to their community. It's also how long they have operated their business, MacPherson Construction & Design. The timeframes are identical because the MacPhersons' company and their charity work have always been intertwined.

"We feel like we've been very blessed and we have a moral obligation to give back," Nancy MacPherson says.

The MacPhersons have long been doing so. Not only did they coach their children's sports teams and participate in related booster events, but they also made their personal outdoor basketball court available for their daughter's team to hold practice when a gym was unavailable.

Their kids now grown, the couple have expanded their philanthropic contributions to include service-oriented groups. In 2013, MacPherson Construction & Design donated \$39,672. This year, the company is on track to give \$50,000.

MacPherson is a small business, with just 17 employees. While larger businesses might donate totals in the hundreds of thousands, MacPherson donates nearly \$3,000 per employee, dwarfing the per-employee rates of most corporations.

"WE LIKE THEM TO GIVE A HAND UP, NOT A HANDOUT."

"We were giving personally, and the company was giving, and we finally organized ourselves to give more significant gifts of time and money, rather than just helter-skelter all over the place," says Roger MacPherson. "We made a focused effort the last two years to give more each year than the year before."

The MacPhersons hold high standards for organizations they consider for donations. "We like the ones that are not just a handout," Nancy MacPherson says. "We like them to give a hand up, not a handout."

The couple is heavily involved with the Pratt Fine Arts Center, where Roger was president and board member, and currently serves on the advisory board. One year during the winter holidays, the MacPhersons printed "Pratt Dollars" for employees to spend at the center.



Roger and Nancy MacPherson

"Instead of just giving money, we made it fun and meaningful for the employees and the artists," Roger MacPherson says.

The Pratt Center isn't Roger's only philanthropic endeavor benefiting the arts; he also is the president of the board of directors for the Glass Art Society. Roger says he tends to lean toward art-focused organizations partly because of his background in architecture, and because he finds connecting with people through art fun and rewarding.

"When I can relate to you as the artist and staff member, I get a lot of joy out of that," he says. "As I got more involved in the arts, we realized we could help them in more than just giving money, but by being an enabler of sorts."

He also finds the work rewarding when more than one group benefits: "We love a win-win, where everyone comes away with a good experience."

Nancy has her share of causes and organizations, too. Three years ago, she organized a day of giving through her church. It took place in eight communities, and congregation members helped Seattle's Union Gospel Mission, Northwest Harvest, Habitat for Humanity, and Eastside Friends of Seniors, among others. The annual event has gained traction among the congregation, and the next event will incorporate another congregation to hopefully fulfill more service hours.

The pair also donates to the Bellevue Arts Museum, Heifer International, and the new Washington State University Museum of Art in Pullman.

The company's contributions aren't limited to organizations chosen by the couple. "If one of our employees comes to us with something they want us to sponsor or do, we're all in on that," Nancy MacPherson says.

"Even if it's not our thing, we try to support the causes that are important to the people who are important to us," Roger MacPherson adds.

While the MacPhersons don't have a company program with a special title or a department of people to encourage employees' involvement in philanthropy, they say their employees are like-minded when it comes to giving back to the community. The company has been able to help organizations through in-kind services such as providing large-format printing, hosting fundraisers at their property on Lake Sammamish, supplying lumber and building materials, and offering design services.

"At the end of the day, if somebody else's life isn't better because I'm here, then it's been a wasted day," Nancy MacPherson says.

— MARJORIE CLARK

MACPHERSON CONSTRUCTION & DESIGN

Headquarters: Sammamish

Employees: 17

Year founded: 1983

Tidbit: Their longest-tenured employee has been with them for 29 years.

macphersonconstruction.com

PUBLIC SAFETY IS THE HEART OF PSE'S CHARITY

The Puget Sound Energy Foundation makes charitable donations in two ways: Grants are awarded twice a year to qualifying 501(c)(3) organizations located in PSE's service territory, and contributions are made on behalf of employees and retirees who donate money or time to charitable organizations.

The foundation — which began in 2006 with a \$15 million endowment from Puget Sound Energy — matches 50 percent of cash donations up to \$500 per year, and \$12.50 per volunteer hour up to \$500 per year. PSE has more than 2,700 employees, so the potential for matching contributions is significant. In 2013, the foundation gave \$1 million in grants and matching contributions; it expects to donate another \$1.1 million in 2014.

"It's a wonderful way to help support their charity of choice," says Sandra Carson, executive director of the PSE Foundation.

It is unique for companies to donate on behalf of their retirees.

"I've worked here for 11 years, and it makes me proud to work for an organization that values you when you work there and when you retire," Carson says.

Eighty percent of PSE's annual support goes to projects aimed at enhancing public safety and emergency preparedness such as search and rescue efforts, communications equipment purchases, and emergency generators. In 2013, the PSE Foundation gave a \$15,000 grant for communication equipment and training to the Snohomish County Volunteer Search & Rescue Unit. The training and equipment were later put to use locating victims and survivors of the Oso mudslide.

Other recent grants include \$3,000 to the Redmond Citizen Corps Council to purchase uniforms, \$5,000 to Catholic Community Services of King County for disaster supplies and preparedness programs, and \$3,000 to the Assistance League of the Eastside for assault survivor kits.

"Our grants (fund) everything from an emergency management plan to a fire curtain at the Seattle Children's Theatre," Carson says. "It's kind of a unique niche. We've found that being in safety and preparedness really aligns with the work we do at Puget Sound Energy and the work of our employees."

The other 20 percent of the foundation's giving typically is spent on human services, education, or environmental projects. The foundation's April 2014 grant cycle included funding for the University of Washington's College of Engineering, a summer youth program at Quality Behavioral Health, and volunteer training for the Friends of the Cedar River Watershed.

"Our funding priorities are safety and emergency preparedness, but we don't want to turn away critical needs in our communities," Carson says. "We are part of the fabric of these communities, so we want to do what we can to assist folks in their time of need."

— DANA NEUTS

PUGET SOUND ENERGY

Headquarters: Bellevue

Employees: 3,000

Year founded: 1873

Tidbit: Began as Seattle

Gas Light Company

pse.com



Sandra Carson