

BizSmarts

Jefferson Awards

Firm's gifts fit for Olympian

By Jarondakie Patrick

Carolyn Merek believes her company has an obligation to help others, and that starts with herself – and her own kitchen.

That's where she and her daughter would whip up mashed potatoes for their church.

"I like to make the most of the resources I have," says the president and CEO of eMentum Inc.

Her resources available for community service now include her entire Bethesda information technology contracting company.

To date, eMentum has doled out more than 150 Thanksgiving baskets for needy families. Every employee has bought something, from canned vegetables to flour bags to gift cards, to fill the baskets each of the past five years.

The company's contributions cover a range of activities.

The staff collected several suitcases worth of school supplies to send with a co-worker going to Ghana on a study tour last year. And Merek, whose brother is a K-9 trainer, recently donated \$9,000 to the St. Tammany Parish Sheriff's Office in Louisiana to buy a Dutch shepherd after a K-9 handler there lost his dog suddenly to a medical condition.

But the most memorable experience for Merek is the Special Olympics D.C. Her company sponsors the opening ceremonies, and



Bill Engel of eMentum shows his support for Woodrow Wilson high school's delegation at the Special Olympics D.C. Summer Games in May 2011. Courtesy eMentum

during the three-day event employees visit various schools and centers to work with the Olympians.

"An Olympian from my group read her personal creed. Afterwards, she came over and gave me a high-five," Merek says. "The whole stadium exploded."

eMentum staffers also get the chance to propose their own initiatives that they believe fit the company's culture.

One employee, for example, introduced the One Warm Coat winter coat drive. During a quarterly meeting, employees brought in coats to support the drive.

To make community service easy for employees, eMentum offers them paid time to participate in those activities, which helps ensure a good turnout. And in the process, Merek says, employees get to know one another and bond outside the office.

"It's something positive to rally around besides the latest work assignment," she says.

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eMentum Inc.

Location: Bethesda

What it does: Information technology consulting, particularly for federal agencies

Leadership: Carolyn Merek, CEO and president

Employees: 25

Total philanthropy budget: \$45,000

Community work: Gives employees paid time off for service projects. Helps sponsor Special Olympics D.C. and participates in Wreaths Across America.

What is a Jefferson Award? A national non-profit program that was formed 39 years ago to create a Nobel Prize for public service and now recognizes companies that build community service into their corporate culture. The Washington Business Journal will select and feature one local nominee each month and submit its 2011 finalist for the national awards gala in June.



Good Works

Caps score charity points

Washington Capitals captain Alex Ovechkin recently skated with a Make-A-Wish Foundation child, whose wish was to meet his hockey idol and skate with him after practice at the Kettler Capitals Iceplex. The skate was part of ESPN's "My Wish" series.

In another charity event, the Capitals presented the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors with a \$105,742.76 check during the team's ninth annual Salute to the Military Night. Co-sponsors of that event included EADS North America, Lockheed Martin Corp., Northrop Grumman Corp., QinetiQ North America Inc. and Engineering Services Network Inc.

Below are other local companies and organizations that performed recent good works:

- The American Heart Association capped its recent fundraising activities with the 14th annual Heart Ball at The Ritz-Carlton, Tysons Corner. The event raised more than \$1 million to support cardiovascular research and programs. Donations and sponsorships came from KPMG LLC, Gibson Dunn & Crutcher LLP, Anybill, CGI Group Inc., CareFirst BlueCross BlueShield and Med-Star Health.

- Re/Max Allegiance raised more than \$172,000 for the Children's Miracle Network.

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