



There is a break in the insurance business each year as agents and staff donate time for a blood drive and to a Habitat for Humanity building project, with female members of the team leading the way.

Giving All They've Got

Insurance Agency Shares Time, Resources

By Tom Schuman

The list of groups and organizations that receive some type of support from Bill C. Brown Associates hasn't been updated in the past 18 months. Thus, a number that already totals more than 80 is an understatement of the insurance company's efforts to give back to the community.

Owner and general agent Ron Remak is a lifelong Bloomington resident. Many of the other 24 agents and staff members also have deep roots in the community. They're not keeping score about helping out – several other businesses are also strong supporters of various arts, cultural and education organizations, Remak states. They're simply trying to make a difference.

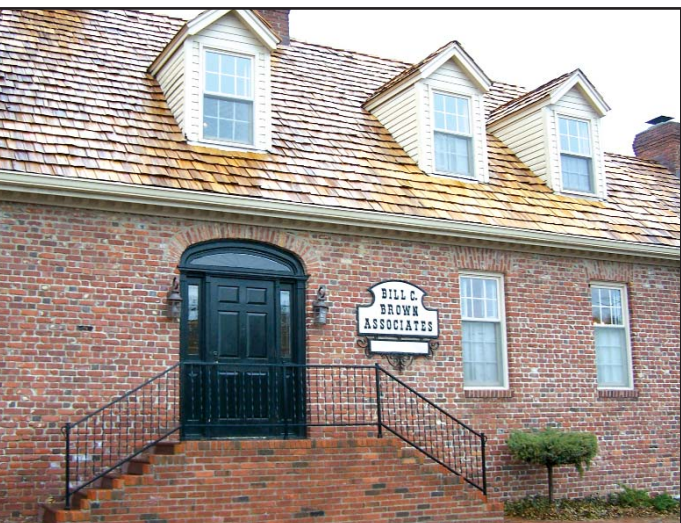
The insurance agency has called Bloomington home for 49 years.

"Many of us went to school here. Our children and now our grandchildren are going to schools, playing sports, cheerleading," Remak offers. "Although we can't say yes to everybody (two to three solicitations a day are not unusual), we look at it as an opportunity to give back. I'd much rather be giving something to a lot of people than give a lot to a few."

Insurance excellence

Remak has been with the company – started by his father-in-law Bill C. Brown in 1958 while he was a sophomore student at Indiana University – for 27 years. The agency focuses on individual and group policies in life, health and disability insurance, as well as retirement planning. It has about 12,000 individual policies and works with more than 300 groups.

Throughout its history, Bill C. Brown has been affiliated with Indianapolis-based American United Life Insurance Company (now part of OneAmerica). While Remak has maintained that important partnership and kept the company name due to its high recognition, he has established relationships with other carriers in order to better meet customer needs.



Remak admits that it makes good business sense to involve the company name and staff with so many worthwhile local efforts, but it's easy to see that's just a byproduct. "You always, always get back 10-fold what you give," he emphasizes, stressing the "always." He considers it a "gift to be surrounded by great people" and says it's only right that any financial reward that comes to the company be shared with those in need.

Agency effort

The secret to success for the agency is that all the employees have embraced the "giving back" model. Whether it's through financial contributions, volunteer time on boards of directors or direct participation in any of a number of special events throughout the year, the Bill C. Brown team is what Remak terms "really intertwined with community giving. We do it with the right spirit. We do it with the right attitude."

Danell Witmer is business and community development coordinator for the agency and is one of several team members who serves as a Big Sister or Big Brother. Under her direction, a committee of agents and staff members gathered approximately five years ago to determine how special efforts might be focused and in what ways direct connections could be made with community agencies.

Just a few of the initiatives include:

- **Four years of an annual Habitat for Humanity building project.** Employees donate either one-half or a full day to painting, siding, roofing, installing insulation and more. Witmer describes it as "trading in ties, skirts and dresses for tool belts." Both she and Remak agree that the women outdo the men.
- **All About Me.** For 10 years, the agency has financially sponsored personalized books that are given to kindergarten students. When the books are distributed on a biannual basis, agent volunteers participate in the schools by reading to the students.
- **Teachers Warehouse,** which involves gathering donations that are used for school supplies for needy students and teachers. The agency's efforts have been used as a role model for other businesses.

A new program in 2006 impacted the agency and the community. For 26 weeks, the Unsung Hero campaign recognized people who work behind the scenes to make a difference. The list includes a variety of nominated volunteers, school officials, spiritual leaders, missionaries and many others.

Radio and newspaper advertisements saluted the winners, who received a framed plaque and \$100 (from the agency) donated to their favorite charity. The goal, Witmer says, is to bring the program back later this year for an encore run.

Award winners came to the agency on a monthly basis to

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Ron Remak



receive their plaque. The interaction between the two groups, Remak says, is "in my 27 years of doing this, some of my most fond moments, when I've been most proud to be associated with this agency."

Ties that bind

Remak is a graduate of Indiana University with a marketing and advertising degree. He played four years of tennis and was elected captain by his teammates. He has been active with the Varsity Club board of directors (including two years as president of the national group) and the Alumni Association, among other organizations. His father taught at the university for an amazing 58 years.

If anyone bleeds cream and crimson, it's Remak.

His first time putting on an IU uniform is among his fondest memories. He recounts numerous athletic events as a spectator and was a key committee member in the selections of current athletic director Rick Greenspan and football coach Terry Hoepfner.

Remak also focuses his own "free time" on young people, serving as a coach for 18 years. He lists the Boys & Girls Club of Bloomington – "it holds a special place in my heart. I spent a lot of time there as a child" – and Big Brothers & Big Sisters as other personal passions.

Bloomington has always been a special place, he recalls, "with a tremendous amount of positive organizations and causes that are extremely worthwhile. One way to measure a community is by its United Way campaign. What I've been impressed with is how well those campaigns have done the last few years. It's not just one gift, but many organizations and individuals. That summarizes where this community is going."



Danell Witmer enthusiastically coordinates the agency's many involvements in the community.

INFORMATION LINK

Resource: Bill C. Brown Associates at (812) 332-9378 or www.billcbrown.com