

The Tell of the Tape in Blackford County

3M Leads the Way in Giving Back

By Rebecca Patrick

In its 50-year history in Hartford City, the 3M manufacturing plant has made many different products, including those under 3M's popular Scotch and Post-it brands – selling to a variety of industries and to consumers. However, one of the best and most lasting things the company has made is its impression on the local community with its civic leadership. “We want to be the area's employer of choice, not only in terms of being able to attract and retain good people, but also being an employer that employees are proud to be a part of,” offers Human Resources Manager Dean Coleman. “With that goes some responsibility to be a good citizen in the community, which is what we strive for.”

Corporate commitment

This philosophy and desire to give back to the community is a hallmark of the 3M Corporation, a member of the Fortune 500, which employs some 70,000 worldwide.

“The 3M Corporation will tell you that their strongest asset is their people. They strongly encourage volunteering in the community of all their employees because they want to become a part of it,” states Plant Manager Andy Marg. “There's a lot of different ways they do that. We have a community affairs budget (from corporate) – every manufacturing plant does – which gives us access to funding for requests from the community.”

Coleman adds, “The 3M Corporation has got dollars to spread around. If they see we're a plant that's got a very good program and people are buying in, they're going to put more money into it versus another plant that's choosing not to participate or as much. It can be a big win-win for us.”

There is also a corporate-wide volunteer program that encourages both employee and community participation. “Basically, it's a grant program. Let's say I have a favorite non-profit group in the community that I like to volunteer time for. If I put in at least 25 hours a year with that group, 3M will give me a \$200 grant to give to them.” Marg explains.

Among the national organizations that 3M corporate is a strong advocate for are United Way, Junior Achievement and Red Cross. With the United Way campaign, 3M's corporate commitment is felt locally by providing additional funding for the area on top of what is raised in Hartford City.

Local 3M management team of (from left) Andy Marg, Dan Borgenheimer and Dean Coleman encourages employees to volunteer in the community.



While 3M's views on giving back are evident to employees, Marg is quick to point out that the action is really driven on an individual basis. "People who want to get involved are going to. 3M just comes along behind that with strong encouragement."

Plant Quality & Safety Manager Dan Borgenheimer theorizes, "I believe the driver is that employees want to give back of their time to whatever is most important to them, whether it be their church or school, to a non-profit or for the community growth. They believe there's more than work in life and more than selfish purchasing for their own benefit."

Coleman concurs. "For a lot of individuals, I think it's an opportunity to give something back to the community where they live or work or both, and there's a strong sense of commitment and pride in the 3M workforce. That's true of Hartford City, Indiana; Cynthiana, Kentucky; St. Paul, Minnesota. That's true anywhere you go with 3M."

Making a difference

In Blackford County, 3M supports both national assistance efforts, like the United Way, as well as local-based endeavors.

In the 2004 United Way campaign, employee and corporate pledges designated for the area totaled more than \$26,000. "That was one of the most successful campaigns any industry has had here in the county for years and years," Coleman shares. "3M's efforts came to a little over 25% of the total United Way funds raised in the county."

"We also received recognition from the United Way organization. 3M as a corporation won the highest award last year (The Spirit of America Award), while Hartford City was one of a handful of 3M facilities that achieved two criteria with its campaign. We had over 50% participation of our workforce and the average giving was in excess of \$50 per person."

On the strictly local level, 3M employee Bill VanNorman spearheads a nearby food pantry (for which he recently received 3M's Corporate Volunteer of the Year Award for his dedicated efforts). "We serve about 30-40 families a week now, and we've been doing that for over two years," he says.

"We have an old blue van outside that we use to transport the food back and forth to the pantry every week. Yesterday, we filled it (including numerous donations from his fellow employees, as well as others in the community) literally from floor to ceiling; it was a typical day – \$1,100 worth of food and it lasts two weeks. It's a real blessing. We see the good that it does in the community."

Each fall, 3M turns its attention to a unique educational activity – held on company property across from the plant – that transports participants back nearly 150 years. "It's a Civil War re-enactment; one of our employees – he's actually a retiree now – organizes that whole thing. In fact, a large group of 3M volunteers and retirees are involved," Coleman states. "This year, it runs from October 7-9, and one of those days is a school kids' day where they come here for a history lesson. Last fall, there were over 2,000 students, with a lot of activity going on."

Local encouragement

A catalyst for much of this volunteer work is the positive environment created by the management team in Hartford City, which makes it easier for employees to volunteer their time. "We encourage people to plug into their passions, and we give people flexible work schedules in order to accomplish this," Borgenheimer declares.

"If someone needs to leave in the middle of the day (to do volunteer work), then we encourage that. We know that in return we're getting a well-rounded person as an employee who, if they feel like they're contributing to the community and the corporation is helping do that, is then going to give 120% when they're at work too; we all succeed."

Borgenheimer himself leaves early to do volunteer coaching. "On those days, I do try to start my day at the office early – understanding I still have a job to do," he emphasizes.

Coleman concludes, "It's been my experience over the years that those folks who, like Dan, are leaving work a little bit early because of a volunteer commitment, are also the kind of people who don't know what a 40-hour workweek is. Even when they're engaged in these activities, they're still working 50 hours a week. 3M is not getting short-changed at all ... far from it."



Hartford City's Bill VanNorman was recognized nationally as 3M's Corporate Volunteer of the Year.

INFORMATION LINK

Resource: 3M at (765) 348-3200