

Corporate Volunteerism: Companies with more than 1,000 employees Winner

Corporate Philanthropy: Sonora Quest Lab employees rack up 2,200 hours of volunteer time

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David Dexter, president and CEO of [Sonora Quest Laboratories](#) firmly believes corporations must serve their communities in good times and bad.

“When I first got here (18 years ago), there were no efforts made in terms of any type of support of charitable organizations or community support, and quite frankly that’s because we had lost a lot of money,” Dexter said. “There just wasn’t money to put in that direction. But very early on in my tenure I made a decision that I was going to join the local Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation board. We didn’t have much money at the time, in fact we were still losing money, but I called them up anyway.”

The JDRF board — all six members — prepared a major presentation for Dexter to convince him to join.

“What they didn’t know is I had a \$25,000 check and had already decided to join, and that was really kind of the start of our involvement in charitable organizations and community giving,” Dexter said. “If you look at JDRF today, we went from six to 50 board members.”

Since 2003, [Sonora Quest Laboratories](#) has raised more than \$1.3 million for JDRF.

Over the years, Sonora Quest has become a valued partner to such nonprofits as JDRF and the American Heart Association, but its first and most significant partnership continues to be the one it shares with Mission of Mercy, which serves thousands of Maricopa County’s medically underserved and uninsured families. Since Mission of Mercy opened its first clinic in Central Phoenix in 1997, Sonora Quest has provided it with pro bono lab work, and continues to do so even as the organization has expanded to six clinic locations throughout county.

“It has been a very long-term program,” Dexter said. “It dates clear back to even before I got here. With Mission of Mercy, we are providing free lab work essentially for those who have fallen through the cracks of the health care system, so it truly is a mission of mercy in that regard. Mission of Mercy really is providing something that is absolutely needed in the community. It’s a pretty significant gift, if you will, on an annual basis, but it’s definitely something that we want to continue to support.”



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160 Sonora Quest Laboratories volunteers at Feed My Starving Children packed 178 boxes of food, equating to 38,448 meals which will feed 105 children for an entire year.

For 20 years, Sonora Quest Laboratories has been the market share leader in clinical laboratory testing in Arizona, performing more 60 million diagnostic tests annually. The company, headquartered in Tempe, employs more than 3,000 people across the state. Through its Community Outreach Team, SQL presents volunteer opportunities to all its employees. Last year, the company held a Day of Service event, inviting charitable organization representatives to visit its headquarters to share volunteer opportunities. Employees donated more than 2,200 hours of their time in 2016 to such organizations as the Salvation Army, St. Mary's Food Bank, JDRF, HALO Animal Rescue and more.

That kind of generosity comes as no surprise to Christina Noble, vice president of business development at Sonora Quest.

"I've worked for (large corporations) my entire career, and this is the first time I've seen a company that has compassion as a stated value," Noble said. "I think that's huge. But what I think takes it a step further and what differentiates SQL from other companies is we actually take that value of compassion and make it part of our employee performance review."

The natural result, Noble said, is that compassionate employees make for compassionate community members.

Noble added that SQL uses various methods to put the word out to its employees across the state about what type of volunteer activities are available to them. Because some employees are in isolated rural areas, SQL even makes sure to mail out a newsletter to all workers, as well as putting information on its website.

And the commitment to giving back isn't limited to rank-and-file employees. Dexter requires that he and his senior staff members either participate in or lead a board or highly recognized charitable event each year.

"We are expected and encouraged to be on a board — and it's not just to be there as a figurehead and nod," he said. "It is about bringing your business acumen to whatever that organization may be and helping them to do better. It's not just writing a check. It's about helping take that organization to the next level. It's paying it forward in the community."