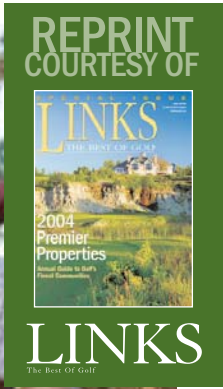




They don't like to give strokes, but Bonita Bay volunteers gladly give of their time and also make significant cash donations to Habitat for Humanity in Lee County, Fla.



Good Works *inside the* Gates



Private-community homeowners are finding there's more to life than golf and five-star amenities

IN 2002, RESIDENTS OF BONITA BAY, A LUXURY GATED COMMUNITY in Bonita Springs, Fla., announced plans for a fundraiser benefiting Habitat For Humanity, the international non-profit organization that builds affordable housing for low-income families. Bill Rummler, a Bonita Bay homeowner who had worked on Habitat homes in his native Edina, Minn., heard about the event and signed on.

That first year, the group raised \$60,000 through a golf tournament. In 2003, Rummler and his wife, Judy, took over as co-chairs. A former IBM man and owner of a computer leasing and remarketing company, Rummler applied his executive skills and those of fellow committee members to raise \$110,000, enough to build four Habitat homes.

BY EILEEN R. BRODERICK



The Cliffs is a multi-faceted charitable machine, using its golf courses for a benefit pro-am (top: Jack Nicklaus at the 2003 BMW Nationwide Tour event) and its residents as construction volunteers on the Pinnacle Point youth camp (bottom).

Their efforts have been so successful that Rummeler and fellow volunteers have gone the extra step and formed the Renaissance Group to work in conjunction with Habitat. This group raises money to enhance Habitat neighborhoods by paving streets, installing street lights and building parks and playgrounds. “We’ve built two homes already and we’ve got money in the bank,” says Rummeler. “Our real challenge these days is how to accommodate the 140 volunteers who want to show up and pound nails.”

The face of volunteerism is changing. In place of the stereotypical bored housewife or the teenager grudgingly seeking community-service hours for graduation are adult men and women retired from successful careers but still young and active. Looking beyond the gates of their Sunbelt sanctuaries, they’re taking an active interest in the towns and

cities that surround them. The impetus for this spirit of volunteerism often comes straight from the top, the community’s developer.

David Lucas, chairman of the Bonita Bay Group, has built his corporation around a simple philosophy: “Do the Right Thing.” Lucas is discreet about his philanthropy, but he isn’t shy about encouraging Bonita Bay residents to get involved. In addition to the Habitat success, another outstanding effort has been made on behalf of the United Way of Lee County. Dick Miller, co-chair for the United Way campaign, estimates that approximately 25 percent of Bonita Bay residents participate in the fundraiser. In 2003 it generated more than \$600,000, with a total of over \$2.6 million raised since 1999.

Bonita Bay residents have been successful enough in their fundraising to send ripples through the region’s network of planned communities. According to Cliff Smith, president of the United Way of Lee County, other United Way chapters have asked how to structure community-based fundraising campaigns of their own. “The Bonita Bay group has pioneered fundraising in gated communities. We are using them as a model for other communities.”

At The Cliffs Communities, headquartered in Travelers Rest, S.C., a “three puppy” system is used to spur volunteerism. “Imagine I have three puppies,” says community founder Jim Anthony. “If I

COURTESY OF THE CLIFFS COMMUNITIES



Top: Nevada Gov. Kenny Guinn (second from right) hosts a charity tournament at Southern Highlands in Las Vegas.
Bottom: residents of The Brooks at Bonita Bay in the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life.

call and tell you to come get one, you're not likely to do that. But if you wake up and the puppy is on your porch, you've got to take the puppy to the pound or adopt it. Since it's right there on your porch, chances are you're going to adopt."

Anthony puts a number of different puppies on his residents' porches, but nearest to his heart is the youth camp he is building in conjunction with Young Life of Colorado Springs, Colo., a non-profit organization that owns and operates youth camps nationwide and in 45 countries. The Cliffs Communities not only donated the land for Young Life's new camp at Pinnacle Point in South Carolina, they also are footing the construction bill.

"We've had people donate land to us before, but this is the first time someone has given us an entire camp," says Denny Rydberg, president of Young Life. "Most of these camps cost between \$25 and \$30 million to build. Pinnacle Point is a totally unique opportunity for Young Life."

Volunteer residents from The Cliffs have helped clear the land, lay rock and build the camp. Once a year everyone gathers for Pinnacle Point Day to see how the camp is progressing and meet many of the children who are involved with Young Life camps.

"We think working with kids is probably the most rewarding thing you can do," says Anthony.

"These projects enrich our company, our property owners and our associates. We all win."

The charity golf tournament is a staple of many non-profit organizations' fundraising efforts. Southern Highlands Golf Club in Las Vegas plays host to the Governor's Black Tie Charity Invitational Golf Tournament hosted by Gov. Kenny Guinn. The three-day event, which has raised more than \$1.8 million in the past four years, benefits the Southern Highlands Golf Club & Charitable Foundation, a supporter of charities including the Make-A-Wish Foundation, Ronald McDonald House and the Candlelighters for Childhood Cancer.

"We feel very strongly about giving back to the community, and the golf course allows us to do that," says Garry Goett, president and founder of Southern Highlands. "We could have a golf tournament here every week, but we do a limited amount to make them very special and raise significantly more dollars."

This year Goett decided to take the message to a wider audience and joined forces with Cox Communications to create a series of public service announcements promoting the various charities. A total of 5,500 PSAs will run over a 12-month period.

Looking ahead, Bonita Springs, Fla.-based WCI, which adheres to the philosophy, "Good philanthropy is good business," is planning to underwrite several golf tournaments at the company's Parkland (Fla.) Golf and Country Club. According to the company's Maria Poston, "Our golf tournament partners will be in line with WCI's areas of charitable interest, including youth, education, the environment and affordable housing. WCI will pay for the entire cost of the tournament so the non-profit can focus the sponsorship dollars earned on their programs."

These stories of individual and community fundraising efforts are enlightening. For example: the volunteers who have taught children to read, helped build a daycare center for migrant workers or regularly cook dinners for the homeless. What stands out is how these talented, successful people have combined their business acumen with genuine compassion to make their retirement about more than just good times and golf. As Jim Anthony says, "If you're given a skill or an expertise in life, the only way to fully exercise that skill and expertise and be fulfilled is to give back." ■