



ABOVE: While in Guatemala to help build a house for Habitat for Humanity, Jeff Cardwell and his daughter, Sara, were a big hit with the local children.

RIGHT: Jeff Cardwell and his daughter, Sara Cardwell, work to build a house with Habitat for Humanity in Guatemala. Cardwell runs a non-profit organization called the PHP (People Helping People) Network out of his store, Cardwell Do it Best Home Center in Indianapolis.



People

As a way to give back to the local community, the owners of Appcon Lumber in Glenville, W. Va., dedicated a portion of their store warehouse to serve as a food bank



By Heather Kauffman-Peters

Community service can be a win-win for retailers. A good deed in exchange for good publicity gives everyone a boost. Most hardware retailers engage in some form of service such as sponsoring a Little League team or donating time or supplies to local charities.

HOWEVER, A FEW HARDWARE RETAILERS have gone beyond traditional community service efforts to become ongoing relief leaders in their community and the world.

Passion For Service

The mission statement at Cardwell Do it Best Home Center in Indianapolis reflects President Jeff Cardwell's passion for service.

"Our mission is simple. It's all about people helping people to build a better community in which we live, work and raise our families," he says.

People helping people is not only the store's mission, it is also the name of

really touched his heart was a little girl who was running a lemonade stand to raise money for her brother's liver transplant.

Cardwell also runs a non-profit organization called the PHP (People Helping People) Network out of the store. The organization is a 501c3 non-profit with no paid staff. (For more information on Cardwell's program, go to www.phpnetwork.org).

"Everything we do is volunteer-driven," he says. "There are plenty of causes and enough giving for everyone to get involved."

Cardwell, who has led teams of volunteers around the world, says the majority of the work he does involves providing disaster

Helping People

Hardware Retailers Making a Difference Beyond Their Stores

Cardwell's weekly radio show, which airs from his salesfloor every Saturday. The one-hour radio show started on Sept. 4, 2001, and is broadcast live.

"I profile community people who are doing great things in our own backyard or around the world," Cardwell says. "Our motto is 'one hour of good news only.' There's no bad news on the show."

Cardwell has interviewed several well-known guests including Millard Fuller, founder of Habitat for Humanity, and Dr. Chuck Dietzen, founder and president of the Timmy Foundation. But one guest that

relief. He recently led a team of doctors to El Salvador to work in a medical facility for a week. While there he also did a distribution of food and toys. In 2006, he led 350 volunteers on a Habitat for Humanity and Fuller Center for Housing Blitz Build for victims of Hurricane Katrina. And he organized \$5 million in relief money for victims of a devastating earthquake that hit El Salvador in 2001.

"I love doing it and that's why I do it," he says. "But, I couldn't do it without a great team (in the store). Everyone is passionate about a life of service."





Jeff Cardwell (left) poses with Millard Fuller, founder of Habitat for Humanity, during the "Servant's Heart Award Banquet" held in February 2006.

Cardwell and his store staff host numerous community service events for every season and every holiday. In spring, they sponsor an area Great American Clean-Up by donating trash bags and gloves. In summer they co-sponsor "America We Remember," an event held at a neighborhood park honoring members of the police department, fire department and military. In June 2006, 10,000 people attended the event, which included live music and speeches from elected officials.

For Arbor Day, the store coordinates a tree distribution with elementary schools. According to Cardwell, the event educates children about trees and forestry in a classroom setting. They usually show the children how to plant trees by planting one on the school campus.

For Labor Day, the store hosts the Labor Day Fun Fest, partnering with many

"We're always wondering how we can do one more thing, but we always manage."

Because of his high-profile relief efforts, Cardwell was asked to give a speech at the 3rd Global Summit on Peace through Tourism, which was held in Thailand in 2005. He spoke about how to get volunteers involved in relief efforts.

"In my experience, everyone wants to get involved," he says. "It's human instinct to help others, but most people don't know where to start. They get bombarded by the media and end up overwhelmed. We just direct their energies and give them a place to start."

Cardwell's advice for making a difference with global and community service is to keep it simple. "Find a place to make a difference and go do it," he says. "It's like the starfish stuck on the beach. There may be hundreds of them and the task

Owner Richard Burke's daughter, Deana Burke, founded the not-for-profit food pantry called Visions, Vessels, & Victory in 2000.

"I was down on my luck, cried out to the Lord, and this is what he gave me to do," she says.

In 2004, her father asked her to come back to work in the store. At the time, Deana did not have a location for the food pantry, so he offered her space in the warehouse. He also donated freezers and built shelves. "They made a very nice pantry," says Deana.

The food pantry is comprised of three separate pantries: the Emergency Food Services for people in urgent need; the USDA, which provides food commodities for the majority of the clients; and the Victory Pantry for working people who do not qualify for other programs but still need help making ends meet.

For the USDA and Victory Pantry programs, food dispersment is handled once a month through a separate entrance and after the supply store is closed. Truckloads of food arrive the week before dispersment days. Only emergency food is kept on hand. Food donations come from four county programs and several national programs including Mountaineer Food Bank, Feed the Children and Angel Food Ministries.

The pantry, which is run by volunteers from the store and community, also relies on private donations and fund-raisers.

"Our clients start lining up early in the morning even though we don't open until after the store is closed in the afternoon," says Deana, who is very humble about the valuable service she is providing.

Shackleford adds, "It's a good program. We get a good feeling. And in turn we hope they will say 'That's where I'm going to go when I need something.' But that's not why we do it." **➔**

"It's human instinct to help others, but most people don't know where to start. They get bombarded by the media and end up overwhelmed. We just direct their energies and give them a place to start."

non-profit groups in the area. The non-profits run fund-raisers and set up booths at the store to help them get exposure.

Around Thanksgiving, the hardware store staff conducts a food drive for Hunger Inc. For Christmas they host a toy distribution handled by Volunteers of America. Between 200 and 300 children attend and receive books, toys and a picture with Santa for free. The store has been running the Christmas event for nearly 15 years.

"We're the conduit," says Cardwell. "A lot of good, caring people come together to make these events happen. It's not 100 percent us. We just help facilitate."

He adds, "I get calls all the time from people who know we do this asking if we can host events or do things for them.

may be overwhelming, but it is important to remember that by starting with one you can have a big impact in the life of that one starfish and that is important."

Putting a Dent in Hunger

The staff at Appcon Lumber & Supply in Glenville, W. Va., raised its community commitment to a higher level in 2004 when they built a permanent home in the store's warehouse for a countywide food pantry.

The pantry now supplies food to 314 families (nearly 1,700 people), which accounts for about 26 percent of the population of Gilmer County.

"I am really pleased with the food pantry," says Manager Greg Shackleford. "We are helping those that need help."