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*Sanida & Dritan Saliovski of Luigi's Pizza Pasta
photo by Chris Früche*

The Good Corporate Citizen

By Debbie Vallejo

THERE IS NO SHORTAGE of charitable organizations in need of cash and time for their mission. National organizations like The United Way and the Red Cross raise millions of dollars every year through the generous donations of individuals and corporations. The question for most individuals is not how much to give or even if they should give, but who should they give to?

In Frisco, Frisco Family Services Center (FFSC) raises money locally and serves families and individuals living in the Collin County area. With the population of Frisco growing at such a rapid rate, the group has found the need to pursue

financial backing in the form of corporate donations more important than ever. The organization serves families in crisis and, as the community grows, the number of individuals needing assistance also grows.

Families are continually cutting spending to make ends meet. When there is no longer anything left in the budget to cut, families become one step closer to a catastrophe. Often all it takes is one hospital visit or job loss, and a family goes from cutting it close to absolute devastation. That's where Frisco Family Services comes in.

FFSC provides assistance through its food pantry, adult education classes,

special projects and emergency assistance programs. Individuals in need of care meet with a caseworker that analyzes their situation and comes up with the necessary arrangements for meeting the needs of the family. FFSC is non-profit and survives on donations it raises through individual supporters, special event fundraisers, the resale shop located on Main Street and corporate donations and sponsors. Joni Klarin is the development director for the Center. "We help not only those with low incomes, but also people on a fixed income who may have trouble with an increase in electric bills or unexpected medical bills that pop up," explains Ms.



2006-2008 Frisco Family Services gala logos



from Frisco STYLE Archives

Klarin. “We really try and help individuals maintain their self-sufficiency. Many families have no extra cash and need just one extra expense to throw them into a catastrophic situation.”

THE BUCK STOPS HERE

While individuals may wonder exactly where their money is going when they donate to a larger national charity, there is no question that money donated to Frisco Family Services is going to locals in need. Ms. Klarin is able to think of specific cases and specific names of people the agency has helped. “I remember a man who came in to ask for assistance for his family. He had just moved his family here from New York. As soon as they moved here his son became very ill. After time off from his job and the money for treating his son’s illness, he lost the very job he had relocated here for. By the time they came to us, he had exhausted all of his options and had nowhere else to turn,” says Ms. Klarin. “What rang true was that he wasn’t trying to live off us, but instead had done the right thing and life had really dealt him a situation he couldn’t deal with. We were able to help out his family.” Almost all of the money taken in by Frisco Family Services Center is funneled directly to client services. The overhead of the agency is very low and the majority of labor intensive needs are met through a rather extensive network of volunteers. Almost 80 percent of the money raised by FFSC goes straight to individuals in immediate need.

Where Frisco Family Services works with businesses in the local area and streamlines the organization to send as much money as possible to their clients, some national organizations make many partnerships with both businesses and local charitable organizations, acting as middle man and sending funding essentially

from corporations to other non-profits in need of cash flow.

The Mayor’s Golf Classic and the Annual Gala are large upscale events that account for a big portion of Frisco Family Services Center’s annual budget.

The United Way, for example, has come under fire for allowing its business partners to pressure their employees to donate money. Charities receiving funds from the group were not able to raise money through other sources during times of the year when The United Way held their own major fundraising drives. While The United Way and other large national non-profit organizations have implemented new membership requirements and policies to change these practices, it can be hard to run a tight ship with so many “hands in the pot.” The beauty of a local non-profit is its transparency; the number of hands in the pot is limited and clearly visible.

FUNDRAISERS

Corporations make a significant impact by donating and sponsoring fundraising events for charitable organizations. Frisco Family Services Center has a couple of major fundraisers each year, with additional smaller scale events as needed. The Mayor’s Golf Classic and the Annual Gala are large upscale events that account for a big portion of Frisco Family Services Center’s annual budget.

The 2008 Annual Gala is March 8th and is the largest and most complicated of all the fundraisers for the Center. The event includes a silent auction, poker games, dancing, plenty of food and drinks, as well as a raffle for a very nice car – this year the prize is a sleek Audi TT provided by Boardwalk Audi. Each raffle ticket for the Auto Auction cost the purchaser \$100 and only 750 are sold. A one in 750 chance in winning a very trendy automobile is not too shabby.

The sponsorship price points include a variety of name recognition opportunities depending on the extent of a corporate citizen’s generosity. The more money a company donates to the Gala, the larger its name and advertisement appears on the program and within the walls of the event itself. Sponsorships range from the \$1,500 level all the way up to \$25,000. Other companies donate items for a silent auction, minimizing the payout allowing FFSC to pocket the proceeds. “We put on the fundraisers ourselves,” explains Ms. Klarin. “We have volunteers who take care of so many parts of our fundraising events, as well as business donations and corporate sponsorships, so that we are able to keep most of what we raise during the Gala.” The food for the Gala is donated, taking a large part of the expense for the event off the shoulders of FFSC. Each donation adds up to a large part of the FFSC budget. Individual tickets are also available for people wanting to have a night on the town and donate to a great cause.

Century Bank has several branches in the Dallas area, one in Frisco. They are a corporate sponsor of this year’s Gala event and have staff dedicated to participating in charitable organizations. Mary Greenberg is retail market manager for Dallas and oversees nine Century Bank branches. “We’re a community bank and



Audi TT

believe in being active in the community,” explains Ms. Greenberg. “Our staff is very involved in the organizations in the area. We believe in not just giving donations but also in participating in the events as well.” The bank is also involved in the Gary Burns Fun Run and Merry Main Street.

DIFFERENT WAYS AND REASONS TO GIVE

Not all companies providing money and donations to FFSC reside in Frisco. Many of the companies, such as Boardwalk Audi, are located outside of Frisco but recognize that many of their customers and staff live in Frisco. These companies find it important to assist individuals in communities that are a part of their overall business, not just in the city where their business resides. “So many people live here in Frisco, but work in companies in other areas or cities,” explains Ms. Klarin. “These companies want to make sure the money is going back to the people where they live, not just where they are doing business.”

Local area businesses often make cash donations or create fundraising opportunities themselves. Some restaurants provide food for families in crisis. “The clients come to the center and

restaurants provide boxed up meals for them here,” explains Ms. Klarin. “Those types of partnerships help because they fill an immediate need – in this case feeding people who have come to us for help.”

Luigi’s Pizza Pasta coordinated with Porsche and sponsored a Road Rally during the 2007 Thanksgiving holidays. The entry fees were donated and matched by Boardwalk Audi and Luigi’s coordinated the whole event. Luigi’s also chooses nights periodically throughout the year to donate a percentage of the restaurant’s sales to FFSC. “For the love of family and to show their extraordinary commitment to Frisco, they will do these impromptu fundraisers,” says Ms. Klarin. “This is how the owner of Luigi’s is supporting us.”

Dritan Saliovski is the owner of Luigi’s. “My parents came from nothing, we definitely appreciate the people that have helped us in the past,” says Mr. Saliovski. “Now we are in a position to help others and I take that seriously. There is an established charity here in Frisco that gives money directly to the community – it benefits all of us to help those in need in our area.” Mary Greenberg definitely agrees, “Anytime you give back to local citizens it is strengthening the community itself,” she says. “It takes everyone in

a town working together to make a community successful.”

THE GOOD CORPORATE CITIZEN

What exactly is the duty of a company regarding the needs of the community? Should companies feel the weight of individuals in need? Dritan Saliovski feels the duty a local business holds to its community is, in his words, “huge.” Being a good corporate citizen means doing right by the locals in the area in which a company does business. “We want this area to prosper and grow,” says Mr. Saliovski. “If we can help others and in turn bring business in allowing others to help through us, then we’re all benefiting.”

Many large corporations like Century Bank and smaller businesses like Luigi’s believe in being involved in their local communities for similar reasons. “For a business to be a success it must be involved in the community it serves,” says Ms. Greenberg. With so many companies moving into the area, it is nice to know they are coming with a sense of ownership toward the people who keep them in business.

Debbie Vallejo is a freelance writer living in Frisco.