

FAVORITE THINGS

Volunteering to help others

BY LINDA O'FLANAGAN

This week, we asked readers to tell us about the volunteering they do. We knew you were a big-hearted lot, but the extent and variety of brokers involvement with not-for-profits was astounding ...

The Corcoran Group has its own in-house charity, **Corcoran Cares**, which supports dozens of charitable and philanthropic organizations. It has become a significant way for Corcoran employees and agents to give back to communities where they themselves work and live.

Amy Goldberger, senior associate and an East Side co-captain of **Corcoran Cares**, said, "There are so many wonderful and worthy charities that need help — especially today.

"In the East Side office, we chose charities that are under the radar and don't get the big funding. In today's environment, our agents and staff have continued to step up to the plate and contribute money out of their commissions (agents) and from their paychecks (staff) and the rewards have been more than we imagined.

"Every time we present our check to each of the five local charities' representatives, they are so incredibly grateful

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— ARELENE WEISSBURG

for our support and give us examples of how our contribution has literally changed and transformed lives — from giving children self-esteem and the courage to perform to helping furnish apartments and create new homes for New Yorkers with mental illness."

This week, Corcoran Cares is donating two \$1,200 checks to the Harlem community — one to The Harlem School of the Arts and another to East Harlem School at Exodus House.

Brokers **Jessica Armstead** and **Bruce Robertson** lobbied on behalf of the two non-profits that help educate and inspire young children from Harlem.

A sample of other beneficiaries includes: **Pathways to Housing, Inc.**, which places chronically homeless or mentally ill New Yorkers in rentals; **Opening Act**, which provides theatre/arts programs to NYC's under served public schools; **Reading Reform Foundation of New York**, which trains inner-city school teachers to provide literacy to children; **Bottomless Closet**, which provides economically disadvantaged New York women with interview skills, business clothing and career development programs; and **Stockings With Care**, which provides families with Christmas gifts for their children.

Arlene Weissburg, vice president associate broker at Corcoran, is also involved with a group called Voices

of New York, a local chapter of the national organization the **Colon Cancer Alliance**.

"We convey the importance of early screening and awareness for any changes to your digestive system," Arlene said.

"We have noticed younger people contracting this disease, so awareness is key to saving lives. There are seminars available and support groups to family members, care givers and survivors. There is also a run in Central Park in March every year to fund raise and raise awareness."

In her spare time, Karen Loew, creative director at the Academy for Continuing Education, is the **Coast Guard Art Program (COGAP)** Committee Chair of the Salmagundi Club.

The artists of the COGAP immortalize in their paintings the brave men and women who serve our country in the United States Coast Guard. The Salmagundi Club sponsors the national program of artists who give of their time and talent in support of the armed service.

Karen joined COGAP in 1999 and has contributed 17 works of art, 9 of which were created after her deployment to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba in May, 2002.

"The USCG sent me to Guantanamo Bay to document port security by PSU 305 out of Ft. Eustis, VA. This Port Security Unit, comprised primarily of reservists called into extended service, was the

same one that came to New York Harbor right after the 9/11 attacks on our city.

"It was very important to me, since I was selected to tell their story, that I give them proper tribute as a personal thank you. The brave and selfless work of the USCG is the greatest inspiration for creating my art for COGAP.

You can see Karen's COGAP art at www.USCG.mil/art or on her website, www.KLoew.com

Karla Micalizzi of Century 21 NY METRO volunteers for **ALSAC/St. Jude Children's Research Hospital**.

"It's rewarding on so many levels," said Karla. "I help mainly with the planning of various events here in the City, all to benefit the Hospital. It's a charity near and dear to my heart, going back several generations."

Cheryl Greenberg, a senior vice president at A.C. Lawrence serves food and drinks to the elderly annually at their party. "It gives me a special feeling when I see elderly folks come out of their wheelchairs to dance and become vibrant.

"I also give money, but I can't substitute the experience of giving back to those who have given us so much."

Antonio G. del Rosario, A.C. Lawrence president, volunteers to teach finance and business strategies to kids in the Bronx and Lower East Side through **New York University's Gallatin**



Karen Loew (left) receives a public service award from Rear Admiral Charles D. Michel of the USCG with Claudia Seymour, president, Salmagundi Club, NYC

School.

"I've been doing this for the past 10 years in the summers mostly. It gives me such pleasure to get young people excited about their bright futures and fulfillment in giving back to New York City that has given me so much.

"Charity should never advance your agenda, but it seems like it does since I feel so empowered every time I volunteer.

In this economy, not-for-profits have received much fewer donations, but volunteerism is up double fold. I believe it's a patriotic duty to volunteer."

Brett Thompson of Charles Rutenberg Realty is an active volunteer at the East Village animal rescue organization **Social Tees Animal Rescue Organization**.

"I walk dogs, clean cages, help with adoptions. I'm also on the parents association at my son's pre-school (Village Kids Nursery on West 14th Street) and I provide a jazz trio that I play drums with for fund raisers."

Halstead's **Ross Ellis** supports **Love Our Children USA**, a national nonprofit leader in breaking the cycle of child violence.

Since 1999 the organization has paved way as a 'Go-To' prevention organization for all forms of violence and neglect against children in the U.S.

Ross tells us Love Our Children USA is always looking for volunteers to help in several areas including education, public awareness outreach, development and fundraising and special events. You can find out more at www.loveourchildrenusa.org

Judith Siegel Lief of Warren Lewis Realty Associates Ltd. volunteers with

the **Lauri Strauss Leukemia Foundation** (www.lslf.org).

"This is a family-run foundation that raises money for "discovery grants" for doctors and scientists working on leukemia and allied cancer research. For about 18 years, funds were raised with an annual concert at Carnegie Hall featuring the N.Y. Pops and many, many headliners such as Judy Collins, Maureen McGovern, Skitch Henderson, Marvin Hamlisch, Brian Stokes Mitchell, all of whom had been touched in some way by the scourge of leukemia.

"The first concert I attended, eight or nine years ago," said Judith, "ended with Peter Yarrow singing Puff the Magic Dragon. His final verse described Lauri Strauss, the 26-year-old daughter of Herb and Evelyn Strauss (our founders), who died suddenly of leukemia. I was touched by both the intimacy and poignancy of the experience and vowed then and there to

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— JUDITH SIEGEL LIEF

become a participant in the fight for a cure."

Thanks to the support of volunteers like Judith, scientists have made great strides in the treatment of leukemia.

"Pediatric leukemia, for example, is no longer the death sentence it used to be: These children are growing up to lead long, healthy and productive lives."