

Because We Care

By Lori Fentem, President, Synergy Solutions, Inc.

What would you say is the common element that unifies everyone involved in the call center channel? Is it the passion for the customer experience? A quest to increase efficiency and maximize ROI? A way to improve sales rates? A slicker set of technology tools or a way to ensure compliance? Certainly these elements are critically important, but members of the American Teleservices Association (ATA) have found something even more fundamental that unifies this industry.... we are all human beings. And despite all of the challenges inherent to the channel, these resilient human beings never waiver in their commitment to making the world a better place. It is from this passion, this desire to help others, that the Call Centers Care movement was born.

Call Centers Care is the philanthropic umbrella under which members of the industry help others on a local and national basis through events organized by volunteers within the ATA. The Call Centers Care movement originated within the ATA's network of local chapters. The chapters are already serviced by volunteers who are committed to their industry and to goals of the ATA, but these volunteers wanted to find a deeper way to connect with members, With our strongest asset being the sheer volume of people employed in our industry, why not harvest the size of this workforce to achieve collective good? Hence, the first Call Centers Care event was hosted by the Arizona Chapter in 2003. I am very proud to have been involved with this inaugural event which featured a 5K Walk/Run to support domestic violence victims. The goal of this first event was multi-faceted. We wanted to raise funds for a worthy cause but also to help instill a sense of pride in a workforce that was being demonized in the media during the Do Not Call frenzy. Additionally, mobilizing to help others in a highly visible manner could serve to negate some of the public and media misconceptions. This first team was over 100 people strong as they donned the now famous lime green t-shirts and took to the streets of Phoenix to show the world that Call Centers are filled with amazing people who are committed to giving back in their communities.

Call Centers Care has simply exploded from that point forward. Chapters around the nation have embraced the movement and hosted numerous events that have made meaningful contributions on a local and national level. In just the past year, the South Central Chapter collected enough donated food to fill an entire truck. The New York Metro Chapter has raised over \$10,000 in the past year for groups including Make A Wish Foundation and the Ronald McDonald House as well as local causes that assist teen mothers and beautify local neighborhoods. The Chicago Metro chapter hosted an event for cancer patients and their families while the Midwest chapter collected over 300 toys for children as well as coats for local residents in need. In the Ohio Valley Chapter, funds have been raised for the American Red Cross and the West Coast chapter has held events to support various environmental causes as well as animal rescue groups. The Potomac Chapter has devoted their time to the needs of the Capital Area Food Bank while the Southeastern chapter has held multiple events in the last year including a large blood drive, a social event to benefit the Atlanta Children's Shelter and they organized a Relay for Life team for the fight against cancer. Meanwhile, the folks in Arizona

continue to raise money by walking and running each year to help domestic violence victims and they also organize an annual Diaper and Underwear drive for shelters as well as collect toys for pediatric patients in the county hospital.

In addition to all the amazing things that chapters have done, we also come together as a community during the ATAs' national events. The Annual Convention and the Washington Summit both include a Call Centers Care event in the host community and the number of participants continues to grow. These large group activities have included helping in local shelters, parks, food banks and working with Habitat for Humanity.

We are unified by not only our profession but by our human spirit. Call Centers Care is a means by which we can come together as a community to give back to others and remind the world that we care.

CALL CENTERS CARE (CCC) represents the philanthropic initiatives organized by the American Teleservices Association (ATA) and was originated by the Arizona Chapter, largely through the involvement of Synergy Solutions. This initiative was adopted by the ATA to unite members of the call center industry, on a national level, to make available various organized philanthropic efforts to further demonstrate that our industry contributes in a very personal way to local and national causes. Presently, twelve ATA local chapters are active contributors to various causes in their communities under the CALL CENTER CARES umbrella.