

Cover Story

“There’s Always Room at Our Table”

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Members of the Vero Beach Christian Business Association (VBCBA) not only talk the talk, but they walk the walk!

“We have a foundational scripture which is II Corinthians 8:7-15 which talks about giving and providing for people’s needs,” says Maureen Nicolace, president of the VBCBA. “Since 2004 we have donated over \$94,000 to the community, and plan to exceed the \$100,000 milestone in Dec 2012.”

The group consists of area businesses and organizations with this same goal in mind: working together to help those in need. They raise the funds through membership dues, of which 93-percent goes to giving, and fundraising collaborations with businesses including Chili’s, Crisper’s, Vero Bowl, The Majestic 11 Theatre, Postal Connections, and Argenic Chiropractic.

Area organizations apply each year to request funds, and members of the VBCBA’s Missions Board carefully review the submissions before making recommendations. Some of the many groups they have awarded include Breath of Heaven, CareNet, Christian FM, CrossLife Counseling, Framework Productions, Harvest Food and Outreach Center, Master’s Academy, Next Level Productions, The Salvation Army, The Source, Starting Life Over, Teen Challenge, Victory Kids, The Women’s Refuge and Youth for Christ.

The group meets on the fourth Thursday of the month at The Plaza for lunch. Every three months, the format cycles through Business Development, Ministry Spotlight and Networking to equip, educate and encourage the attendees. They offer a time of “community bulletin boards” at every luncheon, where groups can make announcements about upcoming events. They also provide free memberships to other Christian non-profits.

The way in which VBCBA collaborates with the community groups is as varied as those it serves. For example, a toy and polo shirt drive is held for Youth Guidance, and a fall food drive every year for Harvest Food & Outreach Center, just in time for Thanksgiving.

“The VBCBA has been instrumental in providing

Salvation Army with red kettle sponsors and volunteer bell ringers, plus outstanding support for our Christmas toy drive and angel tree program,” says Karl M. Steene, Salvation Army past chair and 10-year Salvation Army board member. “They connect a growing number of needy with the Salvation Army for faith-based counseling, rent and utilities assistance, food and clothing and after school programs. The Salvation Army owes a great debt of gratitude for the broad-based support it receives from VBCBA!”

Bart Mazzarella adds, “Christian FM, a listener-supported station, has been an outreach to our community for nearly 23-years. We can only stay on the air through donations from listeners, business supporters, and organizations like VBCBA.”

Andy Bowler of Indian River Habitat for Humanity says, “VBCBA is a great resource for volunteers at a construction sites, our office and the Home Center store. Also VBCBA members either as individuals or through their businesses provide a lot of the items that you see in our store.”

“The St. Sebastian Conference of the St. Vincent de Paul Society provides services to the poor and needy citizens in our area, including payment of utility bills and prescription medications, as well as providing food, clothing and furniture,” says Dr. Robert P. Christopher, President of the Society. “Funds received from the VBCBA will be used in our Client Aid Program to provide these services.”

Maureen concludes, “Our group is a wonderful snapshot of community collaboration. The more successful we are in gaining members, the more we can bless those in need.”

So join them for lunch! There’s always room at the table. To learn more, visit www.vbcba.org.

• This is part of a series of stories that have published throughout the summer cheering on the collaborative efforts of many of the local non-profits. We hope you’ve enjoyed the series.