

Irvine Uses Clever Fundraisers to Help Coworkers in Need



Deciding what cause to focus on can be a daunting task for any Avnet location – there is such a wide variety, and some are so broad it is difficult to know where to start. But when the Irvine, Calif., branch decided to start a chapter of Avnet’s volunteer organization - Avnet Cares - six years ago, members knew exactly who they wanted to help – fellow employees.

“Our mission is to help the Avnet community,” says Denise Temple, the sales and marketing supervisor who leads Avnet Cares in Irvine. “Rather than tackle a big cause like breast cancer, we want to assist those within the Avnet territory who fall on hard times.”

Over the years Avnet Cares Irvine has assisted several employees, including two who lost their homes in a fire, one who lost her fiancé and the families of two who died unexpectedly, as well as a number of needy families.

“We hear through word of mouth of employees at other branches who are in need and quickly meet to plan what we can do to help,” Denise says. “Irvine is a large branch, so we solicit employees to get involved – some donate money, while others purchase items or bake food.”

In addition to sponsoring food-related events like Hot Diggity Dog or Soup Days (see “Employees Cook Up Funds for Coworkers and Competitors in Need”), Irvine employees put their culinary talents to good use during the holidays, baking goods for baskets and tins that account managers then purchase to give to their customers.

“Instead of buying gift baskets at Costco for our customers, we decided to make our own to raise money for needy families,” says Denise. “Customers enjoy homemade goods and know that Avnet is supporting the community.”

Avnet Cares Irvine purchased baskets, tins and cellophane wrap and volunteers assembled the gifts during their lunch hour. The holidays also mark a contest pitting account managers against sales and marketing representatives to see which group can donate the most non-perishable food items and grocery store gift cards, which employees then deliver to needy families.

“I’ll never forget the woman who had tears running down her face when we delivered three boxes of food to her apartment,” says Denise.

Another popular competition is Penny Wars, which pits account managers against sales and marketing representatives again, but also allows suppliers to get in on the fun. Both teams are given a five-gallon water jug to fill with pennies, and must offset the amount of any other coin or dollar inserted in the jug with an equivalent amount of pennies. Suppliers enjoy throwing fuel on the fire when they visit by choosing which team to penalize, all in the name of helping the community.

“We spent an entire lunch hour rolling pennies afterward, but Penny Wars was a really fun way to raise money for Avnet Cares,” Denise says.

Irvine’s community relations efforts are so much fun that even those who leave the company continue to participate. “One of our former employees, who now works for a supplier, still does things to help even though she is no longer part of Avnet,” says Denise. “People enjoy being able to directly see where their efforts are going.”