

San Antonio Brightens Birthdays for Boysville

by Valliere Jones, contributing writer

For two years, Avnet Technology Solutions' (TS) San Antonio office has made birthdays happier for children living at Boysville, a home for children in crisis who cannot remain in their own homes for a variety of reasons.

Every month, the office sponsors a party for children celebrating birthdays, providing treats and a gift for each child. Additionally, employees volunteer monthly as "babysitters" to give house parents a night out for shopping, dinner, movies or anything else they need to do. Two employees, Ed Lemus and Michael Stephens, also serve as mentors.

"It is a lot of hard work, but once you see their tiny faces light up every time they see us, you know it is well worth it," says Marie Corpus, human resources representative. "Not only are we helping the community, but we also get to see the direct effects of our donations."

However, the San Antonio team has faced financial challenges in supporting Boysville this year. It was paying for the birthday parties with money raised by Jeans Days, but when they were eliminated employees had to become more creative.

"I started sending invitations asking for volunteers to brainstorm for fundraising events," Marie says. "We would try to tie them to the next holiday or company event."

Employees raised \$1,200 during the holiday season by selling \$1 candy grams, baked goods and \$5 cookbooks full of employee-submitted recipes. They also participated in a chili cook-off, paying \$1 to sample the entries.

"All of this was in addition to adopting 75 angels from the Salvation Army Angel Tree," says Marie. "Our employees are incredibly generous – in fact, they donated \$5 for Jeans Week even after the corporate e-mail came out giving it to employees for free."

Another creative approach was the marketing team's "garage sale" – by selling its closet full of T-shirts, books, bags, promotional items used at conferences, leftover items from quarterly meetings and miscellaneous things like a Tiffany plate, the team raised more than \$1,000 for Boysville.

Boysville has been so touched by San Antonio's efforts that it nominated the office for United Way's Corporate Volunteer of the Year in 2008.