

## WOODLAND HILLS FEELS THE IMPACT OF FOCUSED EFFORT

Because it is located near Los Angeles – the second-largest city in the United States – Avnet’s Woodland Hills, Calif. team felt like a small fish in the community relations pond. “L.A. County is so large that it is hard to feel like you are doing what is needed,” says Mary Kay Roth, sales and marketing manager, who also leads Woodland Hills’ Avnet Cares efforts. “But after an employee suggested we work with Ventura County Children’s Services Auxiliary, our efforts just blossomed.”



Avnet started by doing toy and food drives six years ago. Employees began asking, “What else can we do?” and started volunteering at the annual foster family picnic and Christmas party – creating and running games for children, doing face painting and coordinating the raffle. They also take children on fishing trips and help

organize the storage shed twice a year.

Another way Avnet made a difference for Ventura County Children’s Services Auxiliary, which supports 880 children in single family homes, group homes and in-home foster care, is when it began collecting Target gift cards instead of toys two years ago.

“Everyone loves babies and buying toys for them but it is much harder to figure out what teenagers want,” says Mary Kay. “Donating gift cards allows teens to select their own gifts – choosing something they would really like to have.”

Avnet donated \$3,600 in gift cards last year – so many that Ventura County Children’s Services Auxiliary was able to give one to each child on his or her birthday. But that isn’t the only way employees have reached out to teenagers – several have taken them under their wing at various events.

“We often see the same kids at each event and have gotten to know many of them,” says Mary Kay. “Our employees relate to these teenagers and have connected with them on a personal level. Knowing we have that kind of impact is very rewarding.”

Seventy-five percent of Avnet’s Woodland Hills employees participate in some way each year – something that hasn’t gone unnoticed at Ventura County Children’s Services Auxiliary. “During this past year, I noticed more new names on the list of volunteers and I realized we are moving on to the next generation of Avnet volunteers,” says Pam Waldron, county coordinator. “What has stayed constant is Avnet’s commitment to provide volunteers when needed and to make sure they come to events prepared, enthusiastic and with an understanding of the population they will be interacting with. It is very clear Avnet is committed to this partnership and to continuing to provide volunteers when needed.”

That next generation of volunteers includes several employees’ children, who enjoy helping children their age who are less fortunate, not to mention spending time volunteering alongside their parents. But they aren’t the only ones – serving together has also helped unify the Woodland Hills branch. “Having people from all teams and levels coming together for one cause has really created a sense of camaraderie,” says Mary Kay. “So many say, ‘That was so much fun – can we come back next year?’”