

# PERSPECTIVES

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EXPAND YOUR  
**OUTLOOK**

# Community INVOLVEMENT

BGAs SPEND TIME AND MONEY TO HELP OTHERS

BY JEAN FEINGOLD

NAILBA members didn't wait for times to get tough to help out in their own communities. Many have been active volunteers for years, serving various charitable organizations.





## Resource Brokerage donates at least one percent of its gross revenue to charity every year as well as matching staff donations up to \$500.

**J**ohn Rippinger, President of Resource Brokerage, LLC in Schaumburg, IL, is often airborne while volunteering. A member of the Lima Lima Flight Team, he helps the Ronald McDonald Charities by arranging backseat rides in vintage planes as auction fundraisers. He also flies for Angel Flight, which provides free air transportation to specialty hospitals for the seriously ill.

Rippinger recently spearheaded fundraising to complete the Schaumburg Child and Family Center, a daycare facility for 120 children

from financially challenged families. "They started building before they had all their funding and then it sat for six years unfinished because the State of Illinois pulled out," he explained. An interest free \$1.6 million loan from a local bank got the building done; fundraising to pay that off continues. The unfinished center "was an embarrassment for the whole community," he said. "We needed to finish this without any aid from the state. That we were able to pull together as a community, it meant an awful lot. There was a need and I was able to articulate that to many of the larger businesses in town."

In May, Rippinger makes his third "MIA Hunter" expedition to Papua New Guinea. He'll be leading a three week mission to search for World War II aircraft that crashed with their crews. "There are still 375 MIA wrecks undiscovered in that jungle," Rippinger noted. Escorted by local guides, the group will explore 30 undisturbed sites. Once they find an aircraft's ID number, they call it in to verify it as a missing U.S. military plane. If it is, they document the site so the Joint POW-MIA Command in Hawaii can return later to remove personal effects and remains safely.

Resource Brokerage donates at least one percent of its gross revenue to charity every year as well as matching staff donations up to \$500. Each staff member gets one paid day off annually to do volun-

teer work of their choice. "This has helped the younger people on our staff become more charitably inclined," Rippinger noted. In addition, his speaking fees fund a family charitable foundation.

Alan Protzel of The Marketing Alliance in St. Louis, MO and his wife Joannie first became volunteers after their son received help from the Make a Wish Foundation of Greater St. Louis. They focus on helping seven lesser known children's charities raise funds by putting on golf tournaments, trivia nights, and other events. "Before I get involved with a charity, I look under the hood to see how they spend their money," he said. "Any charity we work with has been vetted. We want the money to be used to help the people the cause is designed to help."

### The NAILBA Charitable Foundation

Beyond what they do in their hometowns, NAILBA members contribute to help small to medium sized charities across the U.S. through the NAILBA Charitable Foundation. Founded in 2001, the foundation spends all the funds donated each year through grants awarded in a competitive process. In 2009, 12 worthy organizations received \$237,000 in amounts ranging from \$10,000 to \$35,000.

The foundation's goal is to enhance the quality of life for people who are less fortunate with a strong preference for programs serving children. Grant funding is designed for special programs or projects beyond the charity's customary services and may not be used for regular operating expenses. There is no maximum grant size, with the amount awarded depending on the size and scope of



the organization and the funding's intended use.

To qualify, an organization must be non-sectarian, responsibly managed, tax exempt, have an audited financial statement, and not have received a NAILBA grant the previous year. Eligible organizations include those serving underprivileged, special needs, and at-risk youth, physically or mentally challenged people of any age, as well as social service, volunteer emergency service, food assistance, and shelter organizations. Programs supporting business and economic research, health promotion, or improving the financial

services industry knowledge base or principles also qualify, as do other unique and unusually uplifting programs.

The organization must be nominated by a NAILBA member who is one of its active volunteers, although the member's name is not revealed during the review process. Application forms are available online ([www.nailba.org](http://www.nailba.org); under Foundation). The deadline is the first Friday in August.

Applications are first reviewed for completeness. Those meeting the minimum requirements are then classified and deliberated on by the Charitable Founda-

tion Grants Committee. The organizations recommended for grants are forwarded to the NAILBA Charitable Foundation Board of Directors who make the final decision on grant awards. Recipients are accountable to the Foundation for how they spend the money and must report on their grant funded activities.

### **Some grant recipients**

Pittsburgh's Beginning with Books children's literacy program instills a love of reading in children from birth to third grade by having volunteers read to them, teaching parents the virtues of reading



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aloud, and giving families books. After years as a volunteer reader, Frannie Katzen, a former teacher, inspired her husband Robert Katzen of Underwriters Brokerage Service to nominate the program. She formed a close bond with her assigned child and his older sister and even after aging out of the program, they remain part of the Katzens' extended family, staying in regular contact and enjoying ballgames and museums together.

NAILBA funds were used to add the Everybody Wins! Power Lunch program. Through this, business-people visit schools once a week during lunch to read to children

one on one. Four schools are already participating and more will be added. "The people who volunteer are thrilled to help a child," Katzen said.

Protzel's nominee, Rainbows for Kids, works with families after a child is newly diagnosed with cancer. "When they're going through the treatment process, unless you've been through it, you don't know what it will be like," he pointed out. The group entertains the children to take their minds off their conditions with parties, athlete and magician visits, and craft activities at the hospital. They also help parents and siblings by giving them positive attention.

Rainbows for Kids used its NAILBA grant to publish a book and CD explaining what to expect, including inspirational comments, a medical appointments calendar, and pictures to show what chemo looks like. About 2500 copies will be ready in April for free distribution through doctors' offices and hospitals. The group had raised part of the publication cost on its own with the grant allowing it to print the books sooner and add the CD.

Another Protzel nominee, Delta Gamma Center for Children with Visual Impairments in Richmond Heights, MO, has received two NAILBA grants to provide home-based educational services for 175 infants and toddlers who are blind

or visually impaired and their families. Without visual cues, childhood development in all areas is hindered. Beyond vision problems, 60 to 70 percent of these children also have either rare medical issues or significant developmental challenges which require specialized care to obtain positive outcomes. The state provides only 42 percent of what these services cost and insurance does not cover them. "We also provide support and resources to the family to help with successful coping during this early period of adjustment," noted Executive Director Debbie Naucke. This includes teaching them planned activities to help the visually impaired child develop and learn at home.

Jeffrey D. Mooers of HD Mooers & Company in Lafayette, CA often gives to charity anonymously. Over time, NAILBA has funded two of his nominees. The Mother Wright Foundation started years ago when the late Mother Wright felt called to feed children and started giving out food. "Next thing she knew, she had a large warehouse in West Oakland filled to the brim with donations, both coming and going," Mooers recalled. "And volunteers. And an overflowing feeling of love and generosity throughout the building, pouring onto the street, where folks in need line up for food, or clothes, or prayers, or hugs." Giving her the NAILBA check moved them both to tears.

Mooers' work with the Downs Syndrome Connection of the Bay Area, another of his grant funded nominees, is more hands on. "I bring my wife and my son Eric, who is nine, with me to Buddy Play events," he said. In Buddy Play, 'typical needs' kids are matched with 'special needs' kids for activities and they play together.



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—John Rippinger

“I like to see these awards being made to these worthwhile organizations,” said Rippinger, who serves on the Foundation board. “If it weren’t for us, they might have had to close a program down or admit fewer kids. I don’t mind asking people in the brokerage industry for money to help them do good on a national level or to nominate a local program.

“I would encourage all members of NAILBA to make some kind of donation as part of your annual dues,” Rippinger said. “It will enable you to get more involved in your local charities and tell them you may help them get a grant. You don’t have to contribute to nominate a charity, but I think you’d feel better if you were contributing.”

**Enormous personal benefit**

While no business benefit is expected from his charitable activities, Rippinger said some clients have sought out his company because of them. But the real payoff for him is that “it makes me feel good that I can do something for somebody else with no expectation of anything. People helped me along the way and I don’t think they expected anything. It’s a pay it forward attitude that you need to have.”

“Whatever you put in, you get a multiple back, even if you don’t want it,” Protzel said. “The rewards are unbelievable, the people you meet are wonderful.”

“I think I get much more out of it than they do,” Mooers said.

“These people are so full of love. The feeling of gratitude I get is overwhelming. Everything jumps suddenly into perspective. I’m inspired, I’m humbled. It validates my existence on a much deeper level than a successful business deal.

“And that carries over into my profession,” Mooers continued. “I feel as though my career gives me a genuine chance to help people who really need help. I tend to work as hard on small cases as I do on big cases because it might be the only shot an individual has to provide for their family. We get some really tough impaired risk cases. If I can find a fit for them, I just feel good. Giving back is very important to me. I didn’t receive the gifts in my life because I deserved them. I got very, very lucky.”

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