

# SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES

In every Publix Supermarket, customers can see the portrait of George Jenkins, who founded the store chain during the depression in the 1930s. Publix has consistently had the highest levels of employee participation in the United Way Campaigns in Broward, Miami-Dade, and Palm Beach Counties. Its associates give generously, even from modest means.

This pattern of giving makes Publix a commendable role model for organizations of all kinds, including law firms. We are not in the depression that George Jenkins faced when he launched Publix in the 1930s. But as the impact of the national housing market meltdown spreads to an ever wider circle of industries and entities, it is increasingly apparent that non-profit community service organizations will be adversely impacted.

## AS NEEDS ARE INCREASING, RESOURCES ARE DECREASING

At the same time that demand for the services of non-profit organizations is increasing, their revenue is under pressure. Investment income for those non-profits with endowments is impacted by the declines in the stock market that also hurt individual investors. There are reports that businesses and individuals are cutting back charitable giving as both try to deal with their own financial pressures.

Now, more than at any time in recent memory, is a time to reflect upon the many ways we can help non-profits to do their important work. With all the talent that lawyers have to offer, we can lead the way in supporting the non-profit service organizations that help make South Florida such an attractive place to live and work.

The need for more help from the legal community comes at a time when many law firms and lawyers are feeling their own financial pressures. For some, these financial pressures may be so great that they could relegate support of non-profits to a very low priority.

## WAYS YOU CAN HELP

No matter what their community purpose, successful non-profits survive with a steady stream of money, effort, and expertise. All three are important, and all three represent ways that each and every attorney can potentially contribute. Feeling personal financial pressure? Then this may be a time where your giving



will have to be of your time. Every non-profit needs “arms and legs” for any number of tasks. Sure your time is precious, but so too are the needs of these organizations.

In difficult times, our charities are in greater need of wisdom too. Every charity must rethink every aspect of its business. Attorneys can be invaluable in joining other professionals in helping a charitable organization tune-up its strategies for these challenging times.

## OUR DUTY TO HELP

Every Florida lawyer remembers the day on which he or she took the Oath of Attorney to become a member of The Florida Bar. In the concluding sentence of that oath, we promised: “I will never reject, from any consideration personal to myself, the cause of the defenseless or oppressed...”

We exhibit our commitment to that oath when we reach out to help those around us who are really struggling. Our law firm colleagues, lawyers and non-lawyers alike, will respect our commitment to serving our communities.

The example of Publix and other fine firms in the area shows what an organization and its employees can accomplish when leadership aligns the workforce in support of the shared values of service excellence and generosity in giving. <sup>1</sup>



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