

Highlights of the vital and ongoing work of the Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce

## Do Well by Doing Good: Why Local Business Leaders Give Back

The idea of “doing well by doing good” has existed long before Ben Franklin coined the phrase. We see more companies than ever engaging in social impact activities.

Chamber members often tell us one of their primary reasons for joining the Chamber is to become more engaged in the community. When we asked members why social impact is important, we heard that engaging with community needs is fundamental to their identity, business practices, and employee experience.

“Our team members are part of the fabric of this community—we grew up here, we raise our families here, we invite our friends here,” said Anthony Woodard, Chief Executive Officer of Woodard Properties. “From providing homes for refugees to supporting education, supplying food to the hungry, sponsoring arts programming, and operating one of the area’s first privately-managed recycling programs—we want to make Charlottesville and the world a better place.”

John Young, Atlantic Union Bank’s Regional President for the Central Western Region, said, “Atlantic Union Bank embraces diversity of thought and identity to better serve our customers, teammates and local communities. Our commitment to helping others is ingrained in our culture.”

For example Atlantic Union Bank stepped up when the historic Jefferson School in Charlottesville needed funding to revitalize the former African American school as a community center. More than a decade later, the bank continues its partnership with the Jefferson School Foundation by highlighting its work and contributing financially.

Charitable contributions to not-for-profit organizations pay back dividends to the community even beyond the direct impact of helping to meet com-



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munity needs. The National Council of Nonprofits reports that nonprofits in the US employ 12.3 million people, with payrolls exceeding those of many other industries. Nonprofits also spend nearly \$1 trillion annually on goods and services.

“At F&M Bank, we understand the valuable role not-for-profits and small businesses play in creating thriving towns and economies,” said President & CEO Mark Hanna. “That’s why we encourage employees to support local causes, and as a company, F&M donates time, talent, and treasure, totaling over \$300,000 annually, to community initiatives.”

Amid the Great Resignation, giving back can be key to retaining your employees. The Deloitte Global 2022 Gen Z and Millennial survey found that workers in this demographic were more likely to stay for five years or more if they were satisfied with their employer’s environmental and societal impact.

Sasha Tripp, Principal Broker and Owner of Story House Real Estate in Charlottesville, told us, “Serving the community is something we all just find to be really fun and fulfilling. It gives us a great chance to meet completely new people, experience walks of life that can be distinctly different than our own, learn more about where our community has weaknesses and room for improvement, and then find small ways that feel manageable and achievable to help improve them. We love the opportunity and are constantly looking for other places where a team

our size could make an impact.”

Public Lands, the outdoor specialty brand that recently opened a new store at Fifth Street Station, weaves social purpose into every aspect of its company culture. Working with local partners, they invite customers and employees to engage with their mission—“to celebrate and protect public lands for all”—through education, volunteerism, and charitable giving initiatives. The Charlottesville store committed over \$30,000 in grants to local nonprofits before opening its doors.

In the Charlottesville region, we’re truly fortunate to have a business community prioritizing giving back. From small businesses to our most prominent institutions, business leaders deeply believe it’s the right thing to do.

“The 2020–2030 Plan of the University of Virginia is to be a great and good university, not only for our students but for the community at large,” said Colette Sheehy, Senior Vice President for Operations and State Government Relations. “Engaging and building relationships with local businesses through the Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce is yet another step in achieving our goals of offering a quality education to tomorrow’s responsible citizen-leaders in a welcoming, vibrant community full of opportunities. UVA plays a major role in the Charlottesville region, and it is our responsibility to be good community partners in order to truly be great.”

Kara Chandeysson, Ting’s Director of Community Engagement for the Eastern Region, said, “It’s important to us to build sustainable digital equity and inclusion programs to help ensure our entire community has reliable access to the internet. Over the years we’ve installed free wifi hotspots at local hubs like Ting Pavilion and the IX Art Park, created a network of local nonprofits in our Friends of Ting program, and worked with local organizations, like Computers4Kids, to help bridge the digital divide.”

Are you looking to expand your company’s social impact? The Chamber is here to help you connect with local partners. Visit [CvilleChamber.com](http://CvilleChamber.com) to see upcoming events and learn how to become a member.



**Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce** 434-295-3141 [cvillechamber.com](http://cvillechamber.com)

The Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce advocates, convenes, and engages to strengthen business in the greater Charlottesville Region.