

PHILANTHROPY

BUSINESS COURIER

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Heartfelt effort goes into that extra mile

BY KATHLEEN NORRIS | COURIER CONTRIBUTOR

The benefits of giving aren't always abstract.

Priority Dispatch became involved with the American Heart Association's Mini-Marathon because founder Dick Thomas saw a stack of boxes on a sidewalk three decades ago, and stopped his truck to volunteer the services of his young company.

That first time, Priority shifted race materials.

By year two, Thomas was on the organizing committee. Since then, his task list has grown, until his firm had become the marathon's mainstay.

When he retired, Thomas passed the marathon torch to son Jeff, now company president, and this year's chairman of the Mini-Marathon effort.

"It's fun to step into my father's shoes," he said.

Professionally and philanthropically, they're big shoes. Priority is one of the region's leading courier/transportation companies, handling some 6.5 million items per year.

Headquartered locally, Priority has delivery centers in surrounding states,



Jeff Thomas

'We promote a lot of causes in our company, but this one is special to us.'

100 employees, and more than 900 independent drivers. It was a pioneer in same-day delivery service.

"We love doing this race, and wrap a real festive occasion around it," said Jeff Thomas. "We move all the gear, prepare and tear down the course, and coordinate communications. After the event, we take all our employees who helped, and their families, out to dinner to celebrate all the work they've done."

Dick Thomas also ran the race for years, and Jeff continues to carry that baton, now with his wife and children.

The benefits of the family's backing for cardiac research proved tangible in 2001.

That's when Dick Thomas underwent quadruple bypass

surgery, and experienced firsthand the impact of the work he had long supported.

"This problem hits close to home for so many people," said his son.

"Starting with Dick Thomas, and now Jeff, Priority Dispatch and their employees have been integral to the success of our largest fund-raising event," said Doug Martin, Metro executive director of the American Heart Association. "Their unflinching loyalty, effort and expertise have been unmatched."

"We've been so fortunate with our business over the last 30 years, and with that comes a responsibility," said Jeff Thomas. "We promote a lot of causes in our company, but this one is special to us."

NONPROFIT FILE

Name: Shared Harvest Foodbank Inc.

Description: Aims to find and distribute food to people living in poverty through a network uniting the public and private sectors and to raise awareness of the impact of poverty.

Executive director: Tina Osso

Board president: Bill Fancher

Address: 5901 Dixie Highway, Fairfield 45014

Phone: (513) 874-0114

Web site: sharedharvest.org



Osso

Fiscal year 2005*

Grants	\$8,789,054
Total revenue	\$9,357,790
Total expense	\$9,635,466
Excess (deficit)	(\$277,676)
Net assets	\$1,651,084

Highest paid employees

Name	Salary
Tina Osso, executive director	\$70,182

Largest program services

Program service	Expense
Administer and solicit donations from food manufacturers and retail outlets; distribute food to food pantries in Southwest Ohio	\$9,204,010

* Source: IRS Form 990

Philanthropy features a profile of a corporate or individual philanthropist in Greater Cincinnati. It also features a weekly look at Nonprofit File | an inside view of one nonprofit organization from the region. Have a candidate for Philanthropy or Nonprofit File? Send story ideas to norriskathleen@hotmail.com or cincinnati@bizjournals.com.