



# you can't put a price on it

**Designers** discuss the riches **they** receive  
from giving their **services** away.

## Editor's Note:

*You may do business in a city, but are you an integral member of your community? This issue's "Idea Swap" gives you a glimpse into a part of business that you may have overlooked – community service. Share your time and talents with people who really need them, and you too will discover the invaluable rewards of working for free.*

## Donating Designers

Beauty matters. Designers know this, and every human being – whether cognizant of it or not – knows it too, somewhere deep within. Beauty, however, can be pricey, and those whose lives it could change the most may not be able to afford it.

Designers who donate their skills and time make real differences in people's lives. And the rewards they receive are just as real – the satisfaction of providing services that are needed and appreciated; genuine membership in a community; and opportunities to collaborate with colleagues in ways that everyday work doesn't provide.

Peggy Violette, Allied Member ASID, and Luba Fox Alexander, ASID, CID, both saw a chance to improve people's lives and found it was worth donating their time and talents to do so. In the process, they not only helped their communities, but also bonded with colleagues and had a whole lot of fun.

## Dreaming of a White Christmas:

### The California Peninsula Chapter Decorates the Bing Crosby Estate

Luba Fox Alexander, ASID, CID, president-elect, California Peninsula Chapter, helped decorate Kathryn and Bing Crosby's Hillsborough, Calif. estate for the Christmas holidays. For two weekends, the general public toured the Crosby home to view spectacular rooms the designers had festively decorated for the holidays. Alexander and John J. Schneider, ASID, CID, decorated the living room and entry. All proceeds were donated to the Coyote Point Museum for Environmental Education.

#### ICON: How did you get involved?

**Alexander:** We were approached by one of our ASID members who was already a member of the auxiliary and had done a show there before, and she was looking for designers to fill up the rest of the rooms. She approached John and me to do the entry and the living room. And so we felt it would be a good opportunity to show how ASID works with the community.

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## Helping Brighten the Lives of the Mentally Ill

### The Tennessee Chapter Gets Involved in a Big Way

Peggy Violette, Allied Member ASID, of the Chattanooga, Tennessee Chapter, co-chaired (with Susan Campbell, ASID) a design project for Magnolia Manor, a low-budget, eight-bed psychiatric living facility. Magnolia Manor is part of the private, not-for-profit Volunteer Behavioral Health Care System. The facility was constructed through a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and also through donations of time, goods and money. The ASID Tennessee Chapter, Chattanooga Association was presented the 2001 Design for Humanity Award – one of ASID's most prestigious awards – for the project.

#### ICON: How did you get involved?

**Violette:** The association got involved through a member's daughter. She was a grant writer for a home for the mentally ill and was disappointed with the institutional feel of the home.

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I was always raised to give back to the community. You can't take, take, take and not give, give, give. It just doesn't balance out. So in my professional career, I also volunteer a lot. It was a good opportunity to show the public our work and benefit a charity and the community at the same time. It also showed how all the designers could work together as a cohesive whole.

#### **ICON:** What were the professional benefits?

**Alexander:** We got a lot of publicity and positive feedback from the event. People called after the event, sometimes just to say what a beautiful installation it was. We also brought photographs to a couple of fairs so when people were buying merchandise they could say, "This was in the Crosby living room or this was in the Crosby entry." And we also had the photographs reduced to notecards. I gave Mrs. Crosby a set as a Christmas present.

#### **ICON:** What were the personal benefits?

**Alexander:** We had started this project at the end of July, started shopping like mad, had things flying in from all over the world, and then unfortunately we had 9/11. It was almost a therapy for us to be together at that time, working on something so positive and looking forward to the holidays. We were given to sporadic outbursts of singing and dancing, playing around and having a good time. We'd group hug and high five, bring in good food and take naps when we needed a break. It was a lot of fun, a lot of camaraderie.

It's very rewarding to do something that touches the public. We almost canceled the show, but we all talked about it and felt that it would be good for the community to have something positive to look forward to after the World Trade Center disaster. It was just wonderful how people came through and how people thanked us. It was a wonderful way for them to see beautiful things in a time in our history when things looked so glum.



I was kind of new in town and thought I would volunteer to help out. Next thing I knew, I was asked to chair the project. That's how Susan and I became co-chairs. I'm very glad I did it. We thought we had done something unique, but we had no idea how unique it was. It was a private mental health-care organization, HUD and our association of ASID working together. It was a good coordination of public and private entities working together to get something done that improves the quality of life for people.

#### **ICON:** What were the professional benefits?

**Violette:** On a professional basis, it certainly made those of us who served on the committee closer. There was a definite bond that grew out of that 10 or 12 of us on the committee who got to know each other better than we would have otherwise.

#### **ICON:** What were the personal benefits?

**Violette:** Mostly the rewards come from knowing you helped. It was a project such that no one individual gained more from it than anyone else. The committee members were very much *not* thinking about what they were getting out of it, and I think that made it more successful than it might have been otherwise. I really think that made it work. They were doing it just to be helping people. ○

## 4 WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

- 1 Contact design-focused service organizations such as Philanthropy by Design ([www.pdb.org](http://www.pdb.org)), Design Response ([www.designresponse.org](http://www.designresponse.org)) and Design Industries Foundation Fighting AIDS (DIFFA) ([www.diffa.org](http://www.diffa.org)). Your local ASID chapter can help put in touch with these organizations, too.
- 2 In the Yellow Pages, look under *Social Service Organizations* and *Charities* to find people in your community to help.
- 3 Ask around. Send out an e-mail to your family, friends and colleagues asking if they know of any group that needs help. Someone close to you may be in need.
- 4 Contact well-known organizations such as the Habitat for Humanity ([www.habitat.org](http://www.habitat.org)) the American United Way ([www.national.unitedway.org](http://www.national.unitedway.org)), the American Cancer Society ([www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)) and the American Red Cross ([www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)) for information on how you can help.