



Report Information from ProQuest

July 01 2013 13:01

Table of contents

1. Mexico event helps fund charities.....	1
---	---

Mexico event helps fund charities

Author: Clayton, Victoria

Publication info: Orange County Register [Santa Ana, Calif] 29 June 2013.

[ProQuest document link](#)

Abstract (Abstract): "I'd consider it a success," says Geoffrey E. Brown, executive director of The Giving Institute, an independent research and education organization that works with nonprofits. "Any time you're infusing \$1 million into the charities of a community, you're doing something substantial."

"It's funny," says [Dick Gebhard]. "I was just a landscaper. I didn't have a bunch of experience in philanthropy or events. People think they can't do things to raise money for charity, but if you put your mind to it you really can."

REGISTER ARCHIVE; Among the key players at Stars and Stripes is Charles Ruck, second from right. Ruck, who has served on the advisory board for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Orange County, is a "Knight" in Stars and Stripes, one of a core group of people who work with the group to help get money to Orange County charities. Also pictured are Keith Rhodes, left, CEO of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Orange County; Daniela Dunlap, Stars and Stripes director; and Erik DiPaolo, board chairman, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Orange County.

Links: [Linking Service](#)

Full text: Think of the charity organization Stars and Stripes as a slump buster for nonprofits.

This week, a few hundred people, many if not most from Orange County, are fishing for marlin or playing golf or otherwise having fun at the annual Stars and Stripes charity event in Los Cabos, Mexico. By Sunday, when most participants will be flying home, the event figures to have raked in between \$2 million and \$2.5 million for, among others, children's groups such as Court Appointed Special Advocates Big Brothers Big Sisters and veterans organizations such as The Wounded Warrior Fund.

The 17-year-old group has been raising money at that level - through a four-day fishing/golfing event in Mexico - even during times when other nonprofits have been shutting down due to a lack of money.

Times like now.

Generally speaking, charities have yet to fully recover from the recession of 2007 and 2008. Giving USA, the annual report of financial trends in the nonprofit world, describes the post-recession era as fundraising's "lost decade." The group estimates that charitable giving won't return to prerecession levels until at least 2018.

Stars and Stripes either never got that memo or, in keeping with its history, ignored it.

Stars and Stripes began in 1996 as a fundraiser for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Orange County. Named for the children it helps - the stars - and the stripes of the marlin to be caught in the Sea of Cortez, the concept was the brainchild of Dick Gebhard, a former board member for Big Brothers Big Sisters and owner of Pinnacle Landscape, a Santa Ana company that designs landscaping for office parks and buildings such as the Honda Center.

Gebhard's big idea?

Get a bunch of corporate types - and some children who need their help - to go fishing together in Mexico for charity.

"Everybody was, like, 'Who is this madman?' " says Bill Sanderson, chief financial officer for Gold State Foods Foundation, the nonprofit that provides accounting and administration services for Stars and Stripes.

"How can he think a fishing tournament is a good idea?"

That first year Gebhard and his wife, Debbie, used their credit card to buy 100 plane tickets to Los Cabos and reserve 50 hotel rooms. They filled the seats and the rooms, raising about \$32,000 through what was then a

fishing-only tournament.

At the end of the event they noted that attendees had a blast and felt great about forking over their money. Over the years, the feel-good tournament has become a key player in Orange County's nonprofit world.

"I think we're probably now one of the biggest fundraisers for these organizations in Orange County," Gebhard says.

To date Stars and Stripes has raised more than \$18 million. In addition to helping Orange County causes (including, this year, Orangewood Children's Foundation and Miracles for Kids), the event raises money for people in the Los Cabos area. The event has helped buy a fleet of ambulances for the Los Cabos Red Cross and build a health clinic in nearby San Ignacio. This year, Stars and Stripes will help a Los Cabos college student buy a prosthetic hand.

The big question for charities, often, is how much the entity spends on overhead versus how much is given away. Stars and Stripes - with a big-money event held several hundred miles from home - might seem vulnerable on that count. But Sanderson says about half the money collected by Stars and Stripes finances the event and other costs, while the other half goes to groups - meaning the net is more than \$1 million a year for nonprofits.

"I'd consider it a success," says Geoffrey E. Brown, executive director of The Giving Institute, an independent research and education organization that works with nonprofits. "Any time you're infusing \$1 million into the charities of a community, you're doing something substantial."

Gebhard believes Stars and Stripes has succeeded, in part, because his group partners with the charities it helps. How much each charity gets depends, in part, on how much it contributes, including getting pledges from recipient groups to match whatever it collects from Stars and Stripes.

"I make them work like maniacs," Gebhard says of his group's charity partners.

The crowd in Mexico this week (about 600 people are expected) is diverse, though Gebhard says it wouldn't be unusual to rub elbows with a billionaire such as Orange County's Henry Samueli, or other successful businessmen and women. But rubbing flip-flops might be a better description, since one of the main draws is the nightly dance party and concert held on or near the sand. (Full disclosure: Eric Spitz, co-owner and president of Freedom Communications, publisher of Orange County Register, is connected to the organization.)

Stars and Stripes takes over the entire Los Cabos Hilton. Attendees who don't want to fish or golf during the day can use the Hilton's spa. There's also an open poolside bar from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. for adults, and a kid zone with face-painting, zip lining and other family-friendly activities. Registration is \$10,000 per team of four, which includes airfare, lodging, meals and activities.

This year's event started Thursday and ends Sunday.

"It's funny," says Gebhard. "I was just a landscaper. I didn't have a bunch of experience in philanthropy or events. People think they can't do things to raise money for charity, but if you put your mind to it you really can."

Illustration

Caption: REGISTER ARCHIVE; Among the key players at Stars and Stripes is Charles Ruck, second from right. Ruck, who has served on the advisory board for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Orange County, is a "Knight" in Stars and Stripes, one of a core group of people who work with the group to help get money to Orange County charities. Also pictured are Keith Rhodes, left, CEO of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Orange County; Daniela Dunlap, Stars and Stripes director; and Erik DiPaolo, board chairman, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Orange County.

People: Gebhard, Dick

Publication title: Orange County Register

Publication year: 2013

Publication date: Jun 29, 2013

Year: 2013

Section: LOCAL

Publisher: Orange County Register

Place of publication: Santa Ana, Calif.

Country of publication: United States

Publication subject: General Interest Periodicals--United States

ISSN: 08864934

Source type: Newspapers

Language of publication: English

Document type: News

ProQuest document ID: 1372388915

Document URL:

<http://proxy.mul.missouri.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1372388915?accountid=14576>

Copyright: Copyright 2013 The Orange County Register

Last updated: 2013-06-30

Database: ProQuest Central

Contact ProQuest

Copyright © 2012 ProQuest LLC. All rights reserved. - **Terms and Conditions**