



SMALL COMPANY HAS BIG IDEAS ON GIVING

“We’re not a big company, but we want to make a big contribution to our community,” says Naomi Neilson Howard, CEO of Native Trails about the company’s new *Community Trails* program that pays employees who contribute time to qualified San Luis Obispo county charitable programs. Employees can take paid time off to volunteer up to 16 hours a year, in lieu of doing their usual job.

“Native Trails has always been about making a positive contribution to the lives of our employees,” says Howard, who started her business on her kitchen table while attending Cal Poly and feels fortunate to be able to live and work on the Central Coast. “Now we want to make it easy for our employees to make a contribution to their community.

The workers responded very positively to the chance to get involved. *“I’ve met many people that have needed help. I always had it in my mind that if one day I could do something, I would. Well now it’s my chance to do so,”* commented one employee, after learning about the volunteer program.

While the charities in San Luis Obispo County get much-needed volunteers, Native Trails expects the program to help build teamwork and a sense of community among its workers.

Lydia Hunt, of the local American Red Cross chapter hopes the program will encourage other companies to get involved. *“I think it’s very important for people to volunteer. It helps them to better understand their community and the services that are available, if they ever need them. Most of the employers in this area are smaller companies, like Native Trails. I hope this inspires them to do something like this too.”*

Naomi Neilson Howard hopes so too. She’s volunteered to share her experience with other local companies about how to implement a similar program.

In addition to supporting volunteers, the company also helps raise money for local charity groups by matching up to \$500 in employee charitable giving through a payroll deduction program. In addition, each employee who contributes 30 hours or more a year can earn an additional \$200 donation from the company for their favorite charity.

Native Trails is a privately-owned company based in San Luis Obispo. The company markets artisan crafted copper bath and kitchen fixtures, made using environmentally responsible materials such as recycled copper and reclaimed wood.

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