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<https://www.bizjournals.com/portland/news/2021/10/07/corporate-philanthropy-winner-2021-large-company.html>

Corporate Philanthropy Winner 2021 (large company): Windermere Realty Trust

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Closer Look

Windermere Realty Trust

What it does: Residential real estate

Company location: Portland

Senior executive: Todd Prendergast, president

Employees: 42

Cash contributions to nonprofits in Oregon in 2020: \$392,959

Employee volunteer hours/pro bono work in 2019: 9,764 hours



WINDERMERE REALTY TRUST

Employees and family of Windermere Realty Trust taking part in a Solve volunteer cleanup effort in downtown Portland.

While Windermere Realty Trust takes pride in giving back to the community, the pandemic put it in a difficult position.

“Our fundraising efforts were not as robust,” President Todd Prendergast said. “We have three mechanisms for raising money, and one of those three is to do special events. That one third of our focus went by the wayside.”

The pandemic halted in-person events and volunteering in 2020. But that didn’t stop Windermere from supporting its nonprofit

partners. In fact, it pushed it to be more proactive and break down barriers that might restrict funding.

The real estate brokerage usually has an 18-month period between grant applications, but it waved that wait period to provide immediate relief to the organizations that had emergency needs.

“We knew a lot of organizations were doing everything they could to keep up,” Prendergast said. “We actually called on organizations to ask where we could help, as opposed to waiting for them to call on us.”

Through these efforts, Windermere totaled \$392,959 in cash contributions to nonprofits in 2020, landing it the No. 1 spot on the Business Journal’s 2021 list of corporate philanthropists in the large company category. Windermere has offices in Portland, Vancouver, Gearhart and Cannon Beach.

With the pandemic, there was a 14% decline in contributions from 2019, but Prendergast saw this as an opportunity to focus on where the greatest need was. It motivated the company to provide funds to local food banks.

Through the Neighbors in Need, Windermere donated \$115,000 collectively.

“We were able to make contributions that weren’t necessarily right within our guidelines in order to get money out to these food banks,” Prendergast said. “We focused on the food banks early on because they were inundated, and basically they were running out of product.”

Windermere’s long-term nonprofit partners include New Avenues for Youth, William Temple House and Bridge Meadows. New Avenues, one of their oldest partners, provides support services to homeless Youth. The company also likes to donate to smaller grass-roots organizations, with contributions around \$5,000.

Employees play a big role in fundraising, and with every home sale, agents provide a minimum contribution to support nonprofit organizations. Agents and employees also help identify potential partners and bring them to a selection committee.

These contributions were the core of Windermere's fundraising last year, and provided approximately \$127,000 last year. The company also had unused funds carry over from 2019.

The pandemic changed the landscape of corporate giving and put intense pressure on nonprofits to support those whose lives were upended. Prendergast recognizes that this has been a challenging year for these nonprofits and the communities they support.

"We've all been affected by COVID, from the standpoint of feeling more isolated and disconnected," Prendergast said. "Unfortunately, many of these people these organizations serve, that's their starting place. Then you throw a pandemic into it."

"To me it highlights the need to recognize how interrelated we are and how much we all need to do to support folks who need it, and to make a bigger effort when you're in a position to do so," he continued.

The goal moving forward is to get back to in-person fundraising and volunteering, and to continue putting a focus on low-income and at-risk youth, women and families.

"We've all gone through a very challenging time, and we're still facing the lingering challenges of COVID and its impact on the community," he said.