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selected based not on innovation in technology, branding or website (though they certainly exhibit all this in spades), but rather for the firm's commendable effort to give back to the community.

Kristy Short • Oct. 17, 2011

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give back to the community. Further differentiating this column from others is the fact that Watkins chose to champion a program that is not only close to my heart, but is in fact an anti-bullying program I personally developed — Operation Nice.

With a very unique angle, this month's column is best served up in a question-and-answer format. So I sat down with George Watkins to get his insight on the importance of giving back to his community and why he opted to champion Operation Nice.

Giving Back — It's the Right Thing to Do

George Watkins, CPA and president of Watkins & Associates has experienced great success with his firm ... growing at a rapid rate. Grateful for his success, Watkins expressed that giving back to his community is simply the right thing to do.

"I've been very fortunate with the success of my practice," Watkins stated. "In fact, I feel so fortunate, that I really want to do something to improve my local community. It's everyone's duty to give a little, individual residents and business owners alike, to make sure our community continues to improve and prosper."

Watkins, aware of the growing bullying epidemic in our nation's schools, identified a bullying prevention program for elementary-aged children and has championed the cause with full force.

The Interview

Kristy: Tell me a little about your firm and the success you've experienced?

George: About seven years ago, I made the transition from being a technician *in* my

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George: I've actually been active in my community for several years. I've been involved with Melwood, a local nonprofit that works with disabled individuals to help them achieve a career and a better quality of life. I've sponsored kids to attend the organization's summer camp, and I currently serve on the board. Over the past year, however, I've wanted to do more. The reason I decided to champion this new anti-bullying program is because I'm passionate about the cause. I have a child in elementary school and think it's important to teach kids early on the importance of being kind and respectful. And that's the focus of Operation Nice.

Kristy: *Why did you choose Operation Nice as your program of choice?*

George: I happened to see the post on Facebook and was interested immediately. I researched it and concluded that it was a program worth championing. I also thought of my own child and wanted to give her and her classmates the opportunity to be involved in a program where the core goal is being kind to each other every day.

Kristy: *How did you get your local elementary school to adopt Operation Nice?*

George: I first approached the principal and explained the program. I offered the website link and some other informational documents. I also talked to the School Board and introduced the program. We worked from there to set dates for the event.

Kristy: *How are you promoting this program within your firm?*

George: I started by sending an email to my entire staff the same day that I decided to sponsor the program. Many staff members have small children, so they were on board immediately. There's a lot of excitement here about giving back to the community and about Operation Nice in general.

Kristy: *Do you feel it's important for other firms to adopt community-enhancing programs?*

George: Absolutely. As a business owner, it's important to pitch in and enhance the

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and now the anti-bullying program. I know that there are many more wonderful charitable organizations out there, like Red Cross, American Cancer Society, Purple Heart, Meals on Wheels, and countless other groups that work to provide shelter to the homeless, preserve our forests and wetlands, advance the arts, etc. I would recommend that firm owners select a cause that is close to their heart and move forward to champion their program of choice. There is no way to describe the feeling you get when you re-invest in your community. All I know is that it feels right. It feels good all the way around.

Final Words

George Watkins is a successful business owner, a dedicated family man, and a responsible member of his community. Success has not been lost on Watkins, but rather has driven him to give back — to invest in his city by championing programs that ultimately make it better. His support of Operation Nice will help to further develop a learning environment that is safe, comfortable and fun for elementary-aged children in La Plata, Md. Watkins' dedication to supporting his local community is commendable and sets an example for others. Nice work Team Watkins! I salute you and others who are active in their communities, as well.

For more information on George's community efforts, contact him at George@watkinscpa.com. For more information on Operation Nice, visit www.operationnice.org.

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