



Amherst

DAY OF GIVING BACK



**How to Organize a
Company-Wide Day
of Giving Back**

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INTRODUCTION

End-of-year celebrations are a way for companies to show appreciation for their employees, and in 2022, Amherst decided to rethink the traditional holiday party with a company-wide Day of Giving Back. Amherst organizes the logistics for employees to spend a day volunteering at local charities; and then everyone reconnects at the end of the day with a smaller wine and cheese party.



As Amherst grew in size, the vision for its holiday celebrations evolved to foster inclusivity and unite employees across diverse offices and locations in a shared sense of connection and joy. **“I wanted our holiday traditions to reflect the collaborative and inclusive spirit of our organization,”** explains Joslyn Berndt Dobson, a founding investor of Amherst Holdings and co-founder of the Amherst Foundation. A trailblazer in integrating social impact initiatives within business frameworks, Berndt Dobson also serves on the Boards of The Amherst Group’s Advisory Council and Amherst Holdings. Recognizing an opportunity to rethink conventional holiday parties, she sought to create a more meaningful and impactful tradition.

Her inspiration came from close to home. One of Berndt Dobson’s earliest philanthropic ventures, CapCity Kids, profoundly shaped her understanding of the transformative potential of volunteerism within a business setting. Established in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, CapCity Kids equips children experiencing homelessness with essential tools for academic success. Over the past two decades, in partnership with Amherst volunteers, the initiative has distributed more than 30,000 high-quality back-to-school backpacks. Reflecting on these efforts, Berndt Dobson notes, **“When people come together to support others, you witness the true beauty of humanity.”**

Amherst now uses the funds that were allocated to holiday parties to give back to charitable organizations, and employees are encouraged – but not mandated – to volunteer. **“It’s amazing what it does for the company morale overall,”** says Courtney Jones, who took over organizing the event along with Jessie Skrhat in 2023. **“Everyone – from employees to the organizations – feels so grateful.”**



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THE STRUCTURE

Being organized is key to establishing a Day of Giving Back, especially if there are multiple branches of the company. Amherst's Day of Giving Back was created by a steering committee at the organization's Austin headquarters. They then established team leads at each of the branches, and each volunteer opportunity at the office has its own team captain.

In 2022, Kim Kline oversaw the inaugural event's operations from the Austin office. **"We started by looking at places in Austin that we could plug into, and we asked employees for feedback on who they'd want us to partner with. We'd then connect with the local charities to see if they could accommodate us with our date, note the number of people they could take, and learn if there were any parameters surrounding the donation."**

Although each charity is different, it's common for nonprofits to provide packages for corporations to volunteer – the organization agrees to host a certain number of volunteers at a time, and often requests a monetary donation.

As she put together the Austin event, Kline created a playbook with email templates for local markets to do their own charity outreach, as well as a project tracker to determine which organizations could accommodate people and the affiliated donations necessary. Employees then signed up to be a part of the charity of their choice.

Each volunteer opportunity has a local team lead. This person is responsible for ensuring that all volunteers complete any prerequisites that the organization requires – for example, signing waivers. They liaise with the charity and communicate logistical information, like what to expect and what to wear, to the volunteers.





“It’s important to start early,” says Jones, the 2023 Day of Giving Back co-organizer. **“A lot of the organizations book out early – some even ask for 12 months.”** Depending upon the size of the company, organizers should allot for a minimum three month lead time. To help foster a sense of teamwork, each Amherst employee received a t-shirt to wear to the volunteer events – the shirts said **“Make a Difference”** with the **“A”** in the Amherst logo.

“Across the board, Amherst employees really valued giving back – it was a great feel-good experience where we’ve gotten an amazing turnout,” shared Kline.

When Skrhat and Jones took over organizing the second-annual event, they leaned on the company’s past relationships with local organizations. As new organizations were brought into the fold, the duo ensured that the nonprofits aligned with the ethos and mission of CapCityKids and Amherst. Having the charities embody the company’s larger mission also helped to foster a sense of teamwork and cohesiveness on the day. Specifically, Amherst focused on organizations that impacted homelessness, food banks and how to help the marginalized, shares Dobson.

“I think it’s really awesome to allow people a variety of opportunities,” says Jones, reflecting on the 10 Austin organizations that were a part of the Day of Giving Back in 2023. **“That was very beneficial, because we had so much interest spread throughout a lot of charitable organizations. The range of opportunities allowed individuals to choose what fit best for them either physically mentally or emotionally.”**



How to Organize a Day of Giving Back

STEP 01

ORGANIZE

Nominate a representative or team of people to organize the company-wide Day of Giving Back.

STEP 02

APPOINT

Appoint a team captain for each region; and a sub-team captain for each project

STEP 03

CHOOSE

Choose a charity or multiple charities that employees can volunteer at for the day.

STEP 04

SET A DATE

Set a date, and outreach charities to determine if they're available on the Day of Giving Back.

STEP 05

SIGN UP

Allow employees to sign up for their preferred charity, and ask the team captains to organize the logistics of each charity

STEP 06

GIVE THANKS

Thank your employees and bring everyone together with a small celebration after everyone finishes volunteering

a) This group should streamline the communications across all offices

a) Determine how many volunteers each organization can accommodate, and document any additional information or donations the organization requests

“Everyone here found this very rewarding. Hopefully this stays a yearly tradition.”

– Branch captain Ryan Wolfe

“Ms. Lopez was close to tears when she got home from work. You and your team did great work.”

– Rebuilding Together Austin

“This group was awesome and exceeded our expectations! They had a little under an hour and they knocked out a palette of diapers! And, most importantly, they were so much fun to work with.”

– Austin Diaper Bank

“[An amazing organization] was Rock Right on Center for Kids in Georgetown, Texas. They do riding therapy with horses for disabled veterans and children...I’m hoping we can work with them again this year.”

– Jessie Skrhat

THE IMPACT

“A favorite program would be different depending upon each person that you ask. I was a team captain for Central Texas Food Bank, and the number of food that we were able to pack for them impacted an enormous amount of families.”

– Courtney Jones



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OVER
1000
EMPLOYEE
PARTICIPATION

In 2022, over 1,000 Amherst employees participated in the Day of Giving Back nationwide, and the program provided support to over 40 charities in 38 U.S. markets. That year, there was a significant focus on projects that focused on hunger relief, with over 65 percent of projects occurring at local food banks.

65%
OF PROJECTS
IMPACTED
FOOD BANKS

In 2023, Amherst employees collectively contributed 2,406.5 volunteer hours across 10 organizations in Austin, 30 in the other U.S. branches, and two internationally in India and Costa Rica for a total of 42 organizations.

2,407
VOLUNTEER
HOURS

These hours are in addition to Amherst's dedicated volunteer time off program, where employees are able to take time to give back outside of this organized day.

42
TOTAL
CHARITIES

The program has had a significant presence at the company's Austin headquarters, as well as in New York City, Atlanta, Charlotte and Louisville. Expanding the program internationally presented its own unique set of challenges and logistics – for example, the Austin-based team sent them the design of the tshirts, and the office produced them locally – but ultimately, the Costa Rica office in particular was able to make a substantial impact by building a road. The following year, they created a community garden, as well as landscaping and a mural for a school.





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“The Day of Giving Back offers our employees a unique chance to engage with colleagues from departments they might not typically interact with,” explains Joslyn Berndt Dobson. **“It’s an opportunity to foster meaningful connections beyond the office walls and outside the usual routines.”** Courtney Jones shares a similar perspective, emphasizing the initiative’s positive impact: **“The boost in morale across the company is truly remarkable.”**

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In November 2024, the Amherst community mourned the loss of Spencer Lindahl, a beloved executive admired for his intellect, integrity, and generosity. As a devoted supporter of the Day of Giving, Spencer selflessly dedicated his time and energy to serving the community, often alongside his wife, Melinda, and their four children. In recognition of his profound legacy, the program has been renamed the Spencer Lindahl Day of Giving — a tribute to a life exemplified by compassion, service, and an unwavering commitment to uplifting others.



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Tips for Hosting a Successful Day of Giving Back

STEP 01

ORGANIZE EARLY

Start organizing the event early.

- a. This ensures that the charity partners are able to accommodate your group on your preferred day

STEP 02

CHARITY PARTNERS

Solicit potential charity partners from your team.

- a. To increase employee engagement and empower them to be involved, ask them for input on places that they'd like to volunteer

STEP 03

CREATE MESSAGING

Create cohesive messaging and a playbook to allow all offices to participate.

- a. Put together a playbook for each office to follow on how to organize a Day of Giving back

STEP 04

PROVIDE T SHIRTS

T Shirts encourage teamwork and show support for a unified goal

