



Sustainable Business Awards for the South East 2004

Case Study - Blythwood Care

Company Background

Blythwood Care is a Christian organisation founded in 1966. It uses surplus goods from businesses and communities for the benefit of other communities both in the UK and internationally. It is a registered charity which helps people regardless of their ethnic origin, religious or political beliefs.

Sustainability Initiatives

Food, clothing, bedding, stationery, educational equipment, toys, hospital and farming equipment, aids for the handicapped and much more are collected throughout the UK and sorted by volunteers at depots. They are then delivered abroad by road, rail or sea. Specific items such as medicines and bulk food are purchased in the country where the better price exists and are of economic benefit to the local economy accrues.

Blythwood also helps those in need in the UK. It co-operates with a range of agencies in the UK to supply furniture, clothing and bedding to those in need and also assist in sustainable project work locally and globally to move people away from dependency towards self-sufficiency. Education, vocational training and job creation are key components of this strategy.

Overseas, Blythwood mainly supports communities in the Eastern European countries of Albania, Armenia, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine. It also sends Christian literature mostly to India and Africa and support missionary and disaster relief work worldwide, often in partnership with others. Recent examples include working with the Red Crescent in Iran and the Red Cross in Serbia.

Blythwood has formed long term partnerships with many organisations both in the UK and overseas. It now has over 200 partners worldwide as well as links with many corporations who donate gifts in kind.

Blythwood Trading Limited (Limited by guarantee) also has charitable status and operates 33 shops across the UK selling good quality donated new and used goods at affordable prices. The profits from Blythwood Trading Limited are used to cover rental and employment costs with the surplus covenanted to Blythwood Care annually.

Summary of Key Achievements

- Over £20.7 million of gifts in kind have been collected and donated¹ in the last two years (as valued by its auditors)



- 6,400 hours of volunteer time was given in Medway during 2003 (target for this year is 10,000 hours)



- 1,520 tonnes of goods were used/reused in 2002 of which two thirds was diverted from landfill²



- 55% of new deal placements went in to full time work between 1998 and 2003



- £150,000 generated from the sale of textiles for recycling



KEY



ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS



BUSINESS BENEFITS



ECONOMIC BENEFITS



SOCIAL BENEFITS



Blythwood new on-site shop



¹ This is a national figure for Blythwood Care

² There was a volume reduction on 2003 but the total value of goods transported during the year was maintained

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Contribution to a sustainable economy

Blythwood Medway employs five full time staff and has plans to expand to 7.5 full time equivalents by December 2006. It also provides volunteering opportunities and currently has 45 regular volunteers. These volunteers gave 6,400 hours of voluntary time during 2003 with an agreed target of 10,000 hours this year. It has opened two new shops locally this year and plan a third early in 2005. Its headquarters are in the Scottish Highlands and it is one of the biggest local employers.

Blythwood Medway offers training to its staff and volunteers in partnership with the Council of Voluntary Services, Business Link Kent and the Learning and Skills Council. Training includes the provision of basic and more advanced First Aid and Health and Safety.

Since 1998, Blythwood Medway has taken part in the New Deal Scheme. During this period they have offered almost 50 six-month placements and have successfully placed 28 people into full time employment. Two individuals who took part in this scheme are now fully employed by Blythwood and are undertaking modern apprenticeships. The last placement was in December 2003.

Enhancing environmental quality

Direct impacts

Blythwood is actively seeking to manage the energy and waste from its operations. It recently relocated to a new warehouse and as a result of grant funding, has expanded this new space with the addition of a mezzanine floor on one side of the warehouse. Blythwood is just beginning to focus its efforts on reducing the environmental impact of its operations.

Up until recently, Blythwood operated its own fleet of trucks. Overseas transport has been outsourced to reduce costs and increase efficiency. Blythwood Medway now operates one van and one company car. Blythwood now rely on partners for transport logistics ensuring return loads are always sourced and hire vans and trucks when required for local use.

Indirect impacts

By finding uses for unwanted products and waste from other organisations and companies, Blythwood is playing a very important role in diverting waste from landfill. In 2002, an average of 300 tonnes of materials passed through its warehouses on a monthly basis, mostly bound for overseas communities. In Medway over 40% of its material was collected locally.

Examples of goods distributed recently include:

- 1,000 unwanted beds from a UK wide furniture company shipped to Albania
- 57 unwanted artificial limbs sent to Serbia, advertised on local TV and adapted for use
- Over 450 cycles and 75 wheelchairs refurbished by local young offenders and returned to community use
- Donated furniture and small electrical goods (after testing) now being sold in new depot shop

Improving the Social Wellbeing of Stakeholders

Blythwood takes used and unwanted goods and gives them to those who need them in communities in the UK and across the



Goods in the warehouse at Blythwood waiting to be put to worthy (re-)use!

world in response to emergencies and in tackling long term social exclusion or deprivation. They are concentrating more on supporting medium and long term projects and helping partner organisations to use education, vocational training and job creation, including micro-financing to move people away from self sufficiency.

For example, a large food manufacturer may pass on products which they no longer want to hold in stock. Blythwood is able to take custody of this stock, diverting it from landfill, and is able to make it available to communities who can benefit from it.

Blythwood often helps individuals referred on from the social services or other statutory and voluntary organisations, who may have recently been rehoused or have particular material needs to get themselves 'back on track'. Blythwood will provide clothing and other materials, such as bedding, kitchen equipment, food, etc to help the individual re-establish themselves. It also helps local groups with gifts in kind.

Blythwood has also recently partnered with Foodbank. Using its strong links with large food companies, Blythwood donate food to Foodbank, which is then packaged up into 10 day supply boxes for those in need, including recipes. Blythwood donated approximately 24 tonnes of food last year to Foodbank.

In 2002, Her Majesty's Young Offenders Institute in Rochester contacted Blythwood to see if they could assist them in finding ways to use a disused engineering facility to provide opportunities for Young Offenders. Blythwood subsequently obtained funding from the Thames Gateway Partnership to train prison officers to be able to supervise young offenders in repairing bicycles. It also used the national press to obtain unwanted bicycles. Blythwood Care was inundated with offers and with support of a £1,000 Department of Trade and Industry grant, managed to gather a large supply of bikes for repair. Blythwood has now partnered with the Inside Out Trust to continue this project. The Young Offenders are renovating as many as 15 bicycles a week and have extended their activities to include wheelchairs. The young men get accredited training and qualifications, as well as work experience. Blythwood is looking to expand its local work from its new location in partnership with the local community and to increase its volunteering opportunities.

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