

Volunteerism Spotlight: Willis Automotive

Even through an unparalleled year like 2020, see how Willis Automotive still incorporated volunteerism into their business model.



When it comes to volunteering in 2020, organizations and companies had to prioritize the safety of their employees while continuing to serve our community during a time of intense need. Willis Automotive (Willis) kept volunteerism and the importance of giving back at the forefront of their business, offering creative and innovative opportunities including food drives, donation collections, silent auctions, and a community-wide car parade – all while adhering to necessary safety precautions.

As one of the top car dealerships in the central Iowa area, Willis Automotive approached United Way of Central Iowa with the idea of hosting a car parade to show support to some of our funded partners and the work they were accomplishing during the pandemic, a perfect example of using a business superpower to create a unique community impact event. The idea sparked from the drive-by birthday parties, baby showers, and graduation celebrations that became popular when social distancing precautions were recommended. The four-hour car parade consisted of more than 70 cars provided by Willis Automotive and Cars and Coffee Des Moines and brought a ton of smiles to those who were able to experience it in person and on social media!

The parade traveled to four funded partners and made a tour around their surrounding neighborhoods. The Willis volunteers felt a renewed sense of purpose and joy as they saw the excitement of our community firsthand. As a bonus, this event gave our community a reminder that we are all in this together and we can-do meaningful things with what we have to make a positive difference.

The car parade inspired a flurry of volunteer and community impact events throughout the year at Willis Automotive. They hosted more than 10 donation collection centers at their offices across central Iowa and had a panel-building event with Greater Des Moines Habitat for Humanity. The panel-build was a great chance for employees to safely participate in a hands-on volunteer opportunity and be a part of the house presentation for the family who would be

moving into the Habitat home. Once again, renewing their sense of community, engagement, and purpose.

These volunteer activities created momentum that led to a great United Way Campaign, which included a silent auction and the Live United Drive, where Willis donated \$50 for each car sold during the month of October. These initiatives raised an additional \$25,000.

Volunteering has the power to raise morale, create a sense of purpose, and of course, create positive, lasting change in our community. United Way of Central Iowa can help organize impactful events that best align with initiatives and goals of your organization, company, or group. If you are interested in hosting your own volunteer event with United Way of Central Iowa, contact Anna Schaber, Volunteer Engagement Specialist, at

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