

CORPORATE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

employees to become involved in volunteer activities and 72 percent have volunteer programs formally endorsed by their chief executive officers.

In North Carolina, corporate volunteer programs vary in size, scope and degree of formality.

In Whiteville, employees of Sprint/Carolina Telephone have helped firefighters teach fire safety to local elementary school children.

In Winston-Salem, employees of the R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co., can apply for grants of \$250 for projects in the community with a limit of \$1,000 per organization per year.

At Wachovia Bank of North Carolina in Winston-Salem, employee volunteer programs are a way to welcome newcomers, says Community Relations Manager Katherine Walker.

"A lot of times, we get new employees transferred in and want to meet people here," she says. "We see this as a way for them to get involved and help the community."

Each year, Walker reviews suggestions from employees for volunteer projects. The Wachovia volunteers have participated in everything from low-income housing renovation to March of Dime telethons.

As concerns about workplace preparedness have grown, R.J. Reynolds has begun targeting its giving resources to education - a move made easier by employee volunteer programs, says Don Haver, the company's vice president for contributions.

For the past three years, Reynolds employees have been volunteering two afternoons a week tutoring students in 12 Winston-Salem middle schools. More recently, the company has recruited employee volunteers for the new Downtown School, a model education program.

Why are so many company volunteer programs focused on schools?

"The way I look at it, we spend those dollars today because if we don't get involved, the cost is going to be greater at a later date," says Bill McLaughlin, personnel manager for Burlington Industries in Greensboro.

Among the education projects for which Burlington employees have volunteered are local "Adopt-A-School" and adult literacy programs.

Recently, the company sponsored a different kind of volunteer effort in which more than 500 employees helped renovate an old YMCA building as a shelter for homeless families.

The project came about when a Burlington manager went to a national sales convention and heard a presentation from an executive who'd sponsored a similar effort in California.

Although companies tend to downplay the public relations benefits of employee volunteer programs,

they clearly are one reason the programs exist.

Some companies have used employee volunteers in their advertising.

Sprint/Carolina Telephone, for example, produced a 30-second television commercial last year that showed employees volunteering in local schools, day-care and youth programs. A series of radio commercials featuring the music of Travis Butler also was built around the volunteer theme.

In addition to boosting their public image, companies say, employee volunteer programs help them maintain a skilled, motivated workforce.

"If we force our employees to work in isolation, they are not going to be happy or productive," says Haver of R.J. Reynolds. "Being part of the community makes them feel better about themselves."

Despite the popularity of corporate volunteer programs, there are obstacles to expanding them.

Among the barriers identified in the Conference Board survey were a lack of employee time (cited by 51 percent of companies surveyed); administrative costs (35 percent), and worker apathy (19 percent).

Still, many companies continue to support employee voluntarism as a way to make better use of their giving resources.

"Instead of the company sitting down and writing a check to some organization, with this concept, the employees themselves have a way to identify with it," says Dick Windham, director of public relations for Burlington Industries.

For her part, Griffin says she would likely volunteer her time even if her employer wasn't supporting her efforts. But Glaxo's involvement makes helping easier.

"Helping out takes a lot of commitment," she says. "And it's very positive for me that the company does this. Everyone at the clinic knows I work for Glaxo. It's important."

Reducing infant deaths

Healthy Start Foundation funded by corporate gift

North Carolina's infant mortality was the worst in the country five years ago, but thanks in part to a \$5 million grant from Glaxo, more of North Carolina's babies now live to celebrate their first birthdays.

By KATHERINE NOBLE

In 1988 in North Carolina, 1,227 bundles of joy turned into caskets of grief.

Often, the cause was simple and preventable: The mother couldn't afford, or didn't know where to go for prenatal care, giving birth to a tiny,

premature infant who had to struggle to survive from the start.

In 1992, North Carolina's babies fared better: 1,031 died.

Since the 1988 figure was released — moving the state to last in the number of infant deaths — the fight has been on to reduce North Carolina's alarming rate of infant mortality.

In 1989, the legislature passed the Infant Mortality Initiative, allocating more than \$10 million to reducing infant mortality. Former Gov. Jim Martin formed the Governor's Commission on Reduction of Infant Mortality to establish local infant mortality committees throughout North Carolina, and serve as an advocate for

HEALTH

mothers and babies.

That's when Glaxo Inc. in Research Triangle Park entered the picture.

"Glaxo made a \$5 million, five-year pledge, that resulted in the establishment of the North Carolina Healthy Start Foundation," says Walter Sheppard, executive director of the commission and the foundation.

The gift was one of the largest Glaxo has made, and its first in combating infant mortality.

"It's really pretty simple," says Ramona Jones, a Glaxo spokesman, "North Carolina's infant mortality

rate was the worst in the nation. Babies were dying needlessly and they shouldn't. We could do something about it, so we should."

Through the Healthy Start Foundation, the commission distributes grants twice a year to programs working to reduce North Carolina's infant mortality.

"We are able to actually direct resources in communities around the state," Sheppard says. "We don't have any of the bureaucracy at all. We are able to cut right to the quick of the problem."

"There are no other commissions that are set up like this."

The foundation will spend itself

and the commission out of business in 1995, Sheppard says, and that is exactly how he wants it.

"I made the commitment to put the commission out of business in five years," he says. That way, he could focus all his efforts on infant mortality and none on fundraising.

But he adds, "By no stretch of the imagination can you solve something as serious as infant mortality in five years."

The commission hopes to bring as much attention, resources and local action to bear on the problem as possible in five years, and

Look for **INFANT**, page 22

Ketchum, Inc.

Founded in 1919, Ketchum, Inc. is the largest and most experienced firm in fund raising, serving the Southeastern Region from our office in Charlotte.

Ketchum services:

Direction and counseling in all aspects of fund raising for non-profit institutions including capital campaigns, planning studies, guidance in long-range development programs, special endowment building programs, computer software programs, electronic prospect information and screening programs, and recruitment of development professionals.



Niles F. Sorensen,
President of Southeastern Region
and Corporate Senior Vice President

Suite 201
428 East Fourth Street
Charlotte, North Carolina 28202
704/ 376-5616
704/ 376-8255 fax

Ketchum, Inc. Headquarters:
Pittsburgh

Other Ketchum offices:
Boston, Chicago, Indianapolis,
Dallas, Los Angeles

Ketchum Canada, Inc.
Toronto, Montreal, Calgary

Chapter One Ketchum Limited
Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire,
England

Member, American Association
of Fund-Raising Counsel