

JAPAN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

branched out overseas, building manufacturing plants and creating corporate conglomerates in small towns and big cities in the U.S. and other countries. It was only then that Japanese companies came face to face with the foreign concept of corporate giving.

Pressure to adapt was felt sharply by Japanese executives, who, at home, avoid being different. In Japan, a widely quoted proverb says: "The nail that stands out will be struck down."

In the U.S., Japanese companies were beginning to stand out. Not least of the reasons for the attention was their lack of "good corporate citizenship" or philanthropy.

"I think the Japanese CEO's want to do roughly what the American companies do," says John Sylvester, director of the North Carolina Japan Center, a nonprofit cultural and education center on the campus of North Carolina State University in Raleigh. "Companies, in general, tend to be nervous about unfavorable publicity - and the Japanese are even more that way."

In the late 1980s, when Japan's trade surplus with the U.S. soared and Americans' regard for the Japanese plummeted, Japanese corporate philanthropy began in earnest.

In typical Japanese corporate style, Japanese executives quickly and thoroughly studied American corporate philanthropy and began adopting some of the practices.

In 1985, for example, the Foundation Library Center of Japan

was set up by Japanese companies to collect information on grantmakers and offer tips to executives.

Today, many large Japanese corporations have created their own private foundations, fashioned after American foundations, with full-time staff and millions of dollars in assets.

In addition, many other Japanese companies have created their own on-site corporate giving programs. Some have charitable funds. Others hold United Way campaign drives. Others promote employee voluntarism.

In North Carolina, there are no Japanese foundations; most of the Japanese foundations are in New York City, Washington, D.C., and California. But several Japanese companies in the state - such as Mitsubishi Semiconductor America Inc. in Durham, Reichhold Chemicals Inc. in Research Triangle Park, Konica Manufacturing USA Inc. in Greensboro and Okuma Machine Tools Inc. in Charlotte - have their own charitable programs.

Reichhold, for example, runs an annual United Way drive and helps organize the Triangle Triumph, an annual charity bike and road race. It also funds charities recommended by its employees.

Mitsubishi has a fund that annually grants about \$200,000 to nonprofits in the Triangle area.

But the Tar Heel operations of the majority of Japanese companies in North Carolina - 60 percent, or about 90 firms - consist only of manufacturing plants without their own independent giving program.

Most, however, are connected to holding companies or headquarters in other U.S. cities. These parent offices in the U.S. generally have

philanthropic programs and are open to funding programs in communities in which affiliates employ workers.

According to the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) in New York, more than 70 percent of all Japanese organizations in the U.S. have corporate giving programs.

Altruism or public relations?

Some observers - including some Japanese people - have criticized Japanese companies for using philanthropy to boost their company's image in the eyes of wary Americans.

"When the trade friction became serious, Japanese companies became more interested in philanthropic activities," says Hiroyasu Higuchi, a Japanese graduate student at Duke University's Sanford Institute for Public Policy. Higuchi will return to Japan this summer to work for the Association for Promotion of International Cooperation (APIC), which researches Japanese aid to developing countries.

"I think that [Japanese] philanthropy is another corporate strategy," he says. "Of course, some companies are very generous - like Sony. So it depends on the company. But generally speaking, they have a concern about the local reaction."

But others say the past motivation behind giving is not as important as the present sincerity of giving.

Sadahei Kusumoto, chairman and chief executive officer of Minolta Corp., writes in a JETRO report that the timing of Japanese philanthropy aroused suspicion but that, fundamentally, the companies are acting out of a sense of responsibility.

"A good thing is a good thing, no matter what people say," he says. "We should ignore such criticism and

continue our efforts."

Forging ties

Earlier this year, the Durham Public Education Network, a nonprofit that supports Durham schools, received a half-million-dollar pledge from Mitsubishi in Durham to be distributed over the next six years.

That's the largest single pledge ever by any company to secondary education in North Carolina, says Tony Habit, executive director of the nonprofit.

"The expectation from [Mitsubishi] is that school change and quality is incremental and ongoing - which is the same philosophy imbedded in the network," Habit says.

The pledge was not simply a matter of luck. Habit says the network has spent years cultivating its relationship with Mitsubishi, which moved to Durham in 1983.

"It's definitely a process," Habit says. "Very early on, after the company broke ground in Durham, there were visits by educators and students. Out of that grew a cultural exchange of art work and writing."

Habit's experience highlights several typical characteristics of current Japanese philanthropy.

First, Japanese companies overwhelmingly give to educational institutions, compared to other nonprofit ventures.

"It's something that's very important in Japan," explains Rayna Aylward, executive director of Mitsubishi Electric America Foundation in Washington, D.C. "And from the point of view of a certain amount of self-interest, it helps the company to have a well-trained work force."

Second, Japanese companies prefer to support nonprofits in their employees' home communities.

"We feel that it's being a good citizen of the community - for employees and their families as well as the community as a whole," says Bill Clark, who handles corporate giving for Sumitomo Electric Corp. in Research Triangle Park.

Third, Japanese grantmakers give sizable gifts to American nonprofits that they know and trust.

Most Japanese companies with philanthropic programs employ American human resources managers who handle nonprofit solicitations. These managers facilitate con-

Look for JAPAN, page 13

HUGO

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

says. "Even people in the surrounding neighborhood were experiencing a great deal of stress, so we did debriefings there, too. Since then, I've been hooked" on volunteering.

Volunteer mental health workers spend about half their time caring for other Red Cross volunteers.

"We send relief volunteers in for three weeks, for 18-to-20-hour days, in absolutely horrendous living conditions," says Clayton of the Washington office. "They're listening to all the stories, seeing the scenes of the disaster. It's very difficult for workers."

In fact, Red Cross volunteers at major disaster scenes - those where the federal government declares a national disaster - now are required to stop in regularly and speak with a mental health volunteer. They don't have to talk if they don't want to, but they must check in while on-site.

"Some just stop in and say everything's fine and leave after two minutes," says LiBethe. "But often, we hear some really sad stories - on top of what they're experiencing from the disaster."

Clayton, a trained social worker who has previously volunteered her mental health services at flood scenes in Ohio and Texas, says debriefing and talking about problems makes for more efficient relief workers.

In taking on mental health assistance, the Red Cross has come face to face with the stubborn stigma that trails mental health in the U.S. - the idea that talking to a counselor is for "crazy" people, Clayton says.

But American Red Cross officials seem to be taking it all in stride. Most speak enthusiastically of the new mental health service as a necessity that was neglected for far too long.

"Mental health is in many ways as important as physical health," says Gisele McAuliffe, spokesperson for the national office of the American Red Cross. "It helps provide a more holistic recovery



Charles Chase stands by his collapsed home in Charleston, SC.

Photo by Laura Dorton

involved in disaster - whether victims or volunteer workers."

In fact, McAuliffe, a former news broadcaster who covered disasters overseas, encourages journalists who cover floods or bombings to meet with Red Cross mental health volunteers as well. "I think the media sometimes overlooks itself in providing mental health support to workers covering disasters," she says. "Everyone, no matter what their role, is affected and will experience stress. They should feel free to use the services."

Sherry Mitchell, director of volunteer services and public relations for the Triangle Area Chapter of the American Red Cross, says the new mental health service fulfills recovery needs that bandages and new homes alone cannot.

"Disasters affect the children's well-being - feeling the world isn't a safe place," she says. "Parents are distraught because they fear they can't make the world a safer place."

Mental health work "has become

a very important part of the recovery process, Mitchell says. "We can help replace the material things they've lost. But now we can [also] work with them emotionally and psychologically."

As part of therapy, mental health volunteers outline for victims typical emotions that follow the experience of a disaster, including denial, shock and anger.

Along with discussing emotions, mental health volunteers refer patients - if needed - to local mental health workers for further care. They don't practice therapy on-site because they spend less than a month there.

LiBethe, who when interviewed, was planning to return to Charlotte from New Orleans, says the personal rewards for the work are vast.

"It's wonderful. You can see the difference you're making immediately."

For information on mental health volunteer work, call your local American Red Cross chapter.

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