

When you think of a bank, checking accounts, loans, retirement planning, and mortgages likely come to mind. However, community involvement and philanthropy are two words that go hand-in-hand with the SunTrust philosophy. The cornerstone of that philosophy is the SunTrust Foundation, which provides community grants to organizations like Goodwill.

"SunTrust has always been a really philanthropic organization," says Steve Vito, regional president of SunTrust Bank, Southwest Florida. "The SunTrust Foundation was created to make sure giving was done in perpetuity."

SunTrust first became involved with Goodwill's mission through the Goodwill MicroEnterprise program. That relationship quickly grew to include financial education seminars for Goodwill clients and employees, and sponsorships of Goodwill's community events. Most recently, the SunTrust Foundation supported Goodwill's Pathways to Opportunity program, which assists adults with intellectual disabilities. SunTrust's contribution helped purchase a van to take participants into the community for hands-on educational experiences.

"Having a van for Pathways is essential," says Fred Richards, Goodwill's vice president of community support services. "It gives our participants the opportunity to practice the life skills they're learning in the classroom in a real-life setting. That will help them become more independent and self-sufficient. And without contributors like SunTrust, these gifts of opportunity wouldn't happen for our participants."

"It's one of the things we are most proud of," says SunTrust Community Development Manager Mark DeHaan. "We're helping get those folks out into the community."

In addition to financial support, SunTrust has also been a valued volunteer partner. In 2015, staff from two SunTrust Bank locations volunteered their time and efforts to design a pair of trees for Goodwill's annual Festival of Trees. In total, the Festival grossed more than \$77,000, which benefited The Southwest Florida Goodwill Foundation.

SunTrust's Foundation committee meets monthly to discuss grant requests, and in 2015, gave \$500,000 to various community organizations. The Foundation looks for organizations that are dedicated to strengthening and supporting the communities SunTrust serves.

"We have a valued partnership," says Mark. "We feel like we are a part of Goodwill. [This award is] an absolute honor."



2015

Breakthrough Philanthropist

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