

Giving Back

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This week in Lyme, N.H., the ABC show “Extreme Makeover: Home Edition” will be making over a home for the Marshall family. For the build, all materials, labor and furnishings are donated. Along with the new house is, of course, a new landscape.

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Trumbull-Nelson Construction, based in Hanover, N.H., will lead the team of volunteers for the build that will be completed, start to finish, in 106 hours. Over 2,000 New Hampshire and Vermont residents have signed up to participate in the build.

Sponsors for the project included Saucier Flynn Landscape Architects, as design professionals, and on the site work side, the list includes James LaMontagne Landscape Co., Cole Gardens, Millican Nurseries, and Gold Star Tree & Turf Farm.

For those participating, not only is it a chance to help out a local family, it's an opportunity to network with other contractors and build relationships. Along with those connections, they will have an opportunity to

work alongside future clients.

So, what can you do if no major networks are planning to show up in your neighborhood? Lots.

If your community is passionate about Little League baseball, sponsor a team. Your company logo on the team's shirts will be seen by many potential clients. Sponsor a team that's walking/running/biking in a marathon. Start a scholarship for students who are planning to get into the field. Find something you're passionate about, or that's touched your life, and see what opportunities there are. If there's not something obvious, get something started.

One recent example of getting something started happened with a friend of my sister. Laurie, a realtor and also very passionate about animals, has channeled her energy into a fundraiser for overseas military K-9 teams. She decided to do something after she learned about Marine Corporal, Dustin J. Lee, who was killed in a mortar attack while serving in Iraq. He was 20 years old. His K-9 partner, a German shepherd named Lex, was injured during the attack. Lex was awarded a Commemorative Purple Heart. He was adopted by Corporal Lee's parents and is spending his retirement visiting veterans in VA hospitals and retirement homes.

The event wasn't designed to drive business to the real estate agency, but it does serve to get the name of the agency out there.

Number 7 on the list in an article at entrepreneur.com titled "9 Free Advertising Solutions" www.entrepreneur.com/marketing/marketingideas/lowcostideas/article202886.html is: "Give back: Any time you do anything for a charity, such as sponsoring an event or donating free materials, make sure the press knows about it ahead of time. They might send a reporter to cover the occasion, but if not, send them photos to publish afterwards."

"Teach an adult education course," is also on the list. Landscape designer Deborah Roberts did just that. As reported by Connecticut Post staff writer, Michael C. Juliano, Roberts has been teaching courses through Greenwich Adult & Continuing Education free for the past year. In the article, Roberts said, "This is a great way for me to get my name out there and meet potential clients."

Mark Ligas, a marketing professor at Fairfield University, commented in the story that this marketing technique gives Roberts the opportunity to explain her business in person, while allowing potential customers to get to know her. He said, "I think this is ingenious."

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