Boeing Employees Celebrate 50 Years of Giving

This fall, Boeing employees in the Puget Sound region are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Boeing Employees Community Fund, which has contributed more than $370 million and 4,000 grants to local community non-profits.

Three current Boeing employees in Washington state have made uninterrupted contributions to the Fund for its entire 50-year history: Diane Rhea of Tacoma, Shirley Haines of Kirkland, and Roman Mayfield of Auburn.

"I'm fortunate to have good health and be able to give 50 years," Rhea said. "A lot of people donate their time, but as a single parent, I didn't have that opportunity."

When the chance came up in 1951 to start donating a little from each paycheck for a charitable fund that would help people right here in their own communities, Rhea, Haines and Mayfield each made the commitment to do so.

The non-profit grant-making organization is the largest employee-owned charitable organization in the world. Employee contributions go to non-profits, most of which are health and human service agencies.

The Fund was established in 1951 as an alternative to the many requests for contributions taking place at the time. Unions representing Boeing employees signed on to the idea of one fund and employees embraced it by donating $250,000 in the first year.

"I kicked around the idea of one fund, and decided it was a good idea, and I've stayed with it since it started," Mayfield said. He also was involved in the fund, serving on the employee board of trustees in 1991 and 1992.

"Even during hard economic times, Boeing employees have given generously to the community," said Alan Mulally, president and chief executive officer of Boeing Commercial Airplanes. "A great example of this is the Sept. 11 disaster relief fund, to which Boeing employees donated nearly $2 million."

Today, Boeing people are celebrating helping organizations such as Children's Hospital, United Cerebral Palsy and the American Cancer Society throughout the first 50 years and are looking forward to the next half-century of giving. Last year, $19.9 million was distributed to Puget Sound area non-profits.

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