

“IN THE COMMUNITY”

A Forward Looking Initiative

BY TANYA SCHWIED

“IN THE COMMUNITY” strives to promote revitalized and engaged communities, providing positive opportunities and experiences to our youth, children and elderly by connecting forward-thinking businesses with communities to support local educational, social and growth programs. This results in strengthened bonds within the community fostering further relationships and opportunities.

I recently had the chance to speak with Larry Kutcher, CEO of Vasco Assets, a private financial firm specializing in luxury assets, to discuss this new initiative. “Bonds within the neighborhood and within the community are no longer the primary focus they used to be. We used to live near our schools, by our synagogues – now we are spread out. Primary bonds that help define and support community have evolved, not always to the good. This

is a response to how we can update and re-create those positive interactions and a way to make sure that we are inclusive.”

This whole venture started from the deeply held values of both Larry Kutcher and Vasco Assets Founder Benny Mor. They asked themselves how do we pay it forward, how do we give back to our kids, and give back to the Jewish community? Larry has spent much time with startups and working with entrepreneurs; that is what he is best at, mentoring and empowering our youth and figuring out ways to enable dreams. Benny moved to Orange County from Israel and believes strongly in giving back. “Many of us have achieved the American Dream and we owe it to those who haven’t been so fortunate to provide the extra assist to help make a difference.” Benny over the years has become passionate about helping youth

and providing opportunities and support, both within the Jewish community and without. For Benny, the teaching of Hillel is a call to action – “If I am not for myself, who will be for me? But if I am only for myself, who am I? If not now, when?”

Vasco Assets is proud to support groups such as “Larger than Life,” the non-profit founded in 2000 by a group of parents of Israeli children with cancer. Each year, patients of all religions come to the States to gain a respite from this terrible disease. As featured in *JLife*, just as the cancer they are fighting doesn’t discriminate between Jews, Christians, Arabs and Druze, etc. Larger than Life doesn’t discriminate either. There are so many worthwhile causes and “In the Community” strives to connect the communities themselves with supportive businesses. As Vasco has demonstrated, the power of a committed core group, fueled



Benny Mor, Founder of Vasco Assets, and Scholarship recipients for the Backhausdance Summer Intensive Program

PHOTO COURTESY OF CHUCK WEINBERG



Benny Mor, welcomed the Larger Than Life kids into his home once again in 2016.

by the financial assistance of like-minded businesses, is astounding.

Ports Street neighborhood in Newport Beach is the model and example of this partnership. In California almost 30% of all public school funding is raised at the local level. Of this about 20% is raised via taxes leaving the last 10% to be raised by other means. In many cases it is left up to the parents of the students to make up this money.

The Andersen DEANS foundation, a 20 year old nonprofit founded by the parents of the Ports Street neighborhood in Newport Beach, held a charity golf tournament at Oak Creek Golf Club in Irvine benefitting their children's school, Andersen Elementary in order to supplement the funds. The funds they raise go towards bringing in specialists, hands on courses in math, science, reading, and writing, purchasing new computers and software, computer related classes and bring in an additional 4-6 teacher aides this year.

Reflecting its commitment to help children, Vasco Assets was the Title Sponsor and supplied several pieces of jewelry for a

silent auction. Other community partners included Fresh Brothers Pizza, 19th Hole Golf Productions and the Anaheim Ducks. Three weeks later on June 16th, the students had an early day to witness the 2nd annual golf ball drop held on the school's baseball field. At 1:55 pm, in front of faculty, parents, and students a green helicopter dropped 2,467 balls into a specially prepared hole bringing four lucky winners prizes between \$500 and \$1500 and raising approximately \$21,000 for the school.

"This can be replicated in communities across Orange County, to support our Jewish schools, programs for the elderly, or any of a hundred needs." Kutcher told me. "There is no limit to what can be accomplished, and the lasting effects of the endeavor will change lives."

The question Kutcher poses to the greater Orange County community is this: "How do we bring and target businesses together to help institutions and build community in their own backyard? We need to shift our thinking in order to recreate the links in the community, empower stakeholders, and

bring together local businesses with the right resources to impact the institutions that need them the most. If not now, when?"

JLife Magazine is proud to be a part of "In the Community." We want to create awareness and pose these questions to the community. We welcome your thoughts and ideas. We want to enroll businesses and communities in this new partnership. If you have an idea or know of a business or something locally in the community that needs our attention let us know. Maybe we can help one another and build back the bonds of what community once used to be. Email Mody Gorsky at *JLife Magazine* or Larry Kutcher at Vasco Assets with thoughts, comments, and questions, inthecommunity@vascoassets.com

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