

Paying it Forward

SGML Alumnus coordinates
\$100,000 Salvation Army project

ACCORDING TO SGML ALUMNUS DAN GRIFFORD, THIS IS THE KIND OF STORY THAT MOST OFTEN HAPPENS SOMEWHERE ELSE TO SOMEONE ELSE... SOMETHING YOU READ ABOUT IN THE PAPER, HEAR ON THE NEWS, OR HAVE A FRIEND MENTION TO YOU. IN REALITY, THIS STORY IS REAL AND IT HAPPENED TO PEOPLE JUST LIKE YOU WHO SIMPLY WANTED TO DO SOMETHING NICE FOR OTHERS BECAUSE, WELL, THEY COULD.



SGML students, faculty and leadership strive for community engagement. It is continually pushed for, focused on, and is something that happens all the time. Except most of the time, you probably don't hear about it. Until now.

Earlier this year, Grifford, an Arizona native and 2007 SGML graduate, learned the Glendale Corps of the Salvation Army needed a roof to replace a failing structure the group was operating out of at 61st and Northern avenues in the West Valley. The effort to organize and implement a construction plan would swell to involve 25 different companies and reap close to \$100,000 in donated labor, materials and sweat—all to benefit the Salvation Army.

Grifford was approached by Glendale City Councilmember Yvonne Knaack who, besides supporting the Glendale Kiwanis Club, is also a member of the Salvation Army advisory board. When she told Grifford of the \$100,000 that was going to be expended, he couldn't help but think: that money should be going to needy families, not to replace a roof.

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“We were able to put together dozens of companies who donated labor, materials, food and overhead to get this job done for free—and actually raised more money than was needed, so we donated that as well,” says Grifford, vice president of Distinctive Services, a roofing contractor. “I can't believe how many people and companies joined in on helping out. This is the type of project that you hear about on the news all the time, in other places. Never would I think that I would be apart of something like this. There were large companies and small companies who did their part, as well as silent contributors who were very willing to help while wishing not to be recognized at all. Many of the companies who helped out were direct competitors of mine, as well as huge manufacturer and supplier companies that were competitors as well.”

Distinctive Services was started by Dan's father in 2002, and he came on board not too long after graduating from high school in 2003. At that time, the company included father, son, and three employees. Since then, it has enjoyed more than 1,300 percent growth and currently has more than 40 employees and revenues exceeding \$3 million annually. “We attribute our growth to the excellent relationships we have with our high-end custom home builders and the repeat business they have given us over the past few years,” says Grifford. “We have been making the rough

transition from the entrepreneurial stage to management stage of our company and it has definitely been a learning experience.”

Grifford, born and raised in Arizona, says his first career objective is to help ensure that Distinctive Services is managed properly while maintaining growth—part of this is a tribute to his parents, perhaps akin to another ‘Pay it Forward’ mentality. “My parents have worked for a long time to make sure that my sisters and I are successful in life and I want nothing more for them than to be able to retire from the company soon and sit back and enjoy the ride,” he smiles. “I aspire to step back in the next couple years from a fully functioning company that is self-sufficient and well-respected around the industry. I believe very much in giving back to the community and would love to do much more in the future—as well as expand Distinctive Services, in other subsidiary industries around real estate and construction.”

Grifford gives accolades to SGML, and notes: “Every time I learned something in class, I immediately began thinking of how to apply it in the real world and how I could use it at work and in life.”

Fortunately for Grifford and the thousands affected by his generosity and passion, it is already working in the real world.



→ DAN GRIFFORD

'07 B.S. GLOBAL BUSINESS

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