

Industry to Organize Around City of Hope in Major Charitable Push

THE OFFICE PRODUCTS INDUSTRY STARTED SMALL, RAISING ABOUT \$50,000. LAST YEAR, THE INDUSTRY RAISED \$15.5 MILLION FOR CITY OF HOPE AND THE TARGET FOR 2020 IS \$17.5 MILLION.

by Rob Kirkbride

Shortly after the tragic death of his daughter Shannon, INDEAL President Dave Bloch was scheduled to meet with one of its suppliers, Safco, in Minneapolis. It was an annual review — a standard meeting INDEAL does with all of its suppliers.

At the last minute, his contact at Safco phoned Bloch and asked: “What would you think of joining us at the City of Hope gala in Chicago for the weekend?” The Safco contact said they could plan the meeting around the event for City of Hope, a Southern California-based cancer center that has become a national leader in advancing research and treatment protocols.

Bloch was searching for a charity to support following Shannon’s death. Dr. Shannon Bloch, who was just beginning her chiropractic career and who wrote health-related columns for Business of Furniture,

died suddenly on June 4, 2019. She was 26 years old.

“I went to the meeting and was just absolutely blown away by the City of Hope gala that they have in Chicago,” Bloch said, describing the formal event held at the Navy Pier. “The event was just spectacular.”

Bloch was surprised to find City of Hope was strongly supported by the office products industry. Over the last few decades, the industry has aided the City of Hope to the tune of more than \$200 million. He was impressed by how the entire office products industry pulled together for a common goal.

A few weeks after the City of Hope gala, Bloch was contacted by John Fellowes, whose company straddles both the office products and office furniture industry. Fellowes invited Bloch to get involved with City of Hope. Bloch thought: Could the office furniture industry support City

of Hope with the same level of passion and unity as the office products industry?

Bloch said he believes it can (and should), and he is leading the way.

“Cancer research is one of the things that hits home with everyone — for so many people in my family and everyone else’s family,” he said. “It just seemed like the type of charity that was broad enough to get the support of our entire industry. There’s nobody that hasn’t been affected by cancer. And what I’ve come to learn is City of Hope’s a little bit broader than just cancer research. They developed a vaccine for tuberculosis several years back. They’re working on a cure for Type 1 diabetes now. And, of course, they’re working on a cure for cancer, but disease prevention and disease healing just seemed like a broad enough overall objective and one that desperately needs more money,

and putting money into research just seemed to make sense.”

The original thought from City of Hope was that Bloch could establish some sort of contract furniture division inside of what they were doing with the office products industry. Bloch told them right from the start he didn't think that would work. He told them if the office furniture industry gets involved with the charity, it had to be representative of the industry, on its own and separate and apart from what the office products industry is doing.

“We've established something where the contract furniture industry will stand on its own,” Bloch said. “Our goal is to develop our own objectives and goals and donation targets and things like that, but at the same time we'll be able to leverage about 38 years that the office products industry has been running with City of Hope.

“So I saw the opportunity to be able to model after what was already done successfully, but at the same time really make this something that's apart and very unique to the contract furniture industry, so that we can rally as a group and potentially even compete against the office products industry to really take this thing to the next level.”

The office products industry started small, raising about \$50,000. Last year, the industry raised \$15.5 million for City of Hope and the target for 2020 is \$17.5 million. “So it's big, big money and it's growing every year and these guys are making a difference. And yeah, the opportunity for us as an industry to potentially do something like this and pull together and have a common goal, it just seemed too important to pass up,” he said.

Bloch is kicking off the office furniture industry's involvement with the City of Hope's annual kickoff event.

When Bloch started looking at charity in the office furniture industry, he found it is a very generous group. But charity giving tends to be very localized with almost nothing being done on a national basis. He also found the industry has tremendous interest in becoming involved in a common charity like this.

Bloch is kicking off the office furniture industry's involvement with the City of Hope's annual kickoff event, which is a tour of its property in Southern California at the end of February. He is reaching out to people who are well-networked in the industry to attend the City of Hope event. He already has a number of commitments for people willing to join him there. He also has commitments from people who aren't able to go to the event but want to get involved.

His intention is to grow an executive committee to the size of the office products industry's for City of Hope, which is potentially 30 or more people — senior executives, people from different paths within the industry, whether it be dealer, manufacturer, major manufacturer rep groups — and then to try to spread the word and encourage individual dealers, individual suppliers to participate in annual activities, whether it be a golf tournament or a fishing derby, a curling bonspiel or perhaps a sponsored product to put together a program where the proceeds from it would go toward the City of Hope initiative.

Bloch said he would like to see some progress made organizing the office furniture industry with the City of Hope charity in 2020, but thinks most of the initiative will start start in 2021. Anyone hoping to help organize the industry can contact him directly through INDEAL.

“I'd certainly be willing to talk to anybody, and this is going to be as inclusive as it possibly could,” he said. “So we want to get people from all positions inside of the industry involved and really make this as broad as possible.

“Cancer is near and dear to a lot of people, and some people are experiencing it right now. So people that are particularly passionate about this, I would really welcome they get involved if they've lost loved ones. But hopefully a side effect of this is maybe this initiative will just encourage some people to be more charitable in some other way. Or maybe they've got another charity that's near and dear to their heart, and hopefully by the industry coming together in this way that it encourages more charitable work in all sorts of walks of life and all areas of everybody's business.” **BoF**