

Community

Civic-minded salon owners build stronger businesses by taking active roles in their communities.

By Rosanne Ullman

We think of the beauty parlor of long ago as an intricate part of the neighborhood: a place whose logo was prominently featured on Little League team shirts, a place whose owner stood alongside the bank president and other business elite at the Founder's Day parade, a place where children gathered after school to wait for their mothers to finish up weekly wash-and-sets.

Now that small salons have become chic enclaves and large salon/day spas have grown into formidable corporate players, perhaps the industry has become disenfranchised from the community. Perhaps opportunities for neighborhood involvement now fall below the salon radar.

Nab!

If anything, community involvement has mushroomed, with salons not only participating in, but often organizing events that touch everyone and everything in town. Salon owners see themselves as both obligated and delighted to make their mark in their communities. The community represents the home of their clientele, a source for staff recruitment, an opportunity for camaraderie with peer business leaders and a pool of vendors for the salon's needs. It's populated with people, and we all know how the salon industry feels about connecting with people. That's our oxygen.

Connecting is a basic need for humans in general, says motivator Mark Scharenbroich, scheduled to be a featured speaker at The Salon Association's January symposium. Connecting fulfills us; it's good for business but also good for our health and

well-being. And it's simply the way many salon owners operate.

Smart Marketing

"Our team aims to exceed expectations both in our studio and in our community," reads the mission statement of John Robert's Hair Studio & Spa in the Cleveland suburb of Mayfield Heights, Ohio. Owner John DiJulius estimates, "We do about 32 things in our community." Some are philanthropic in nature, some are purely business-building and most straddle the bar of

being a little of each. But however it's categorized, linking to the community is almost always smart marketing.

One effective marketing strategy involves forming liaisons with other local companies. DiJulius identifies restaurants, clothing boutiques and other businesses that seek to attract a clientele similar to his, then partners with them to exchange gift certificates.

"We'll trade \$20 or \$50 gift certificates," DiJulius explains. "They give them to their top clients, and I give them to mine.

