

Charitable work is part of Aspen Insurance's DNA

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Douglas Menelly chairs the U.S. Charity Committee at Aspen U.S. Insurance, and is a board member of the northeast chapter of IICF.

When I joined [Aspen](#) nearly three years ago, I was unfamiliar with "VTO Days." When I learned that VTO stood for "Volunteer Time Off," and the fact that Aspen U.S. Insurance provides employees with two fully paid VTO days per year, I was a bit surprised as I had never worked for an organization before that actually pays employees to volunteer their time and give back to the community.

Getting involved

Digging a bit deeper, I learned that this was just one of the many things Aspen does to get involved in charitable organizations and activities in the communities where colleagues live and work every day. Furthermore, I learned that two VTO days is market-leading. My time at Aspen has taught me that charitable activity and

philanthropy run deep and are a critical part of Aspen's culture, a piece of the organization's DNA that inspires and motivates colleagues across the organization.

I then met some of Aspen's [ADARA](#) "ambassadors" to learn more about this amazing charitable organization founded by an ex-Bermuda banker, Audette Exel. The foundation is an international development organization, working with communities and local partners to promote the well-being of children and families in Uganda and Nepal. Our partnership with Adara started in 2007 and has centered on the [Kiwoko Hospital](#) in Uganda. The "Aspen Ambassadors" are a handful of people across the company that spend time each year at this Uganda hospital to see first-hand where our donations are going and being put to the greatest use.

To date, Aspen colleagues have raised more than \$1 million, providing much-needed medical supplies, equipment, and staff to support the growing Kiwoko Hospital, which serves a catchment area with more than 500,000 people. Each year, Aspen hosts a black-tie fundraising gala for ADARA, in addition to dozens of smaller activities for employees to raise funds. This is a truly unique partnership, due to the depth of engagement in the local communities and the way the charity has become embedded within Aspen's corporate culture.

Aspen and IICF

Aspen began working with the [Insurance Industry Charitable Foundation](#) (IICF) only a few years ago. As the largest foundation of its kind for our industry, IICF has chapters across the country and in 2016 launched its first chapter outside the United States in London. I quickly became involved with the organization as a volunteer for some of their charitable activities. Now a board member for the northeast chapter of IICF, I am proud to represent Aspen by working with this great foundation.

Last year, IICF's northeast chapter distributed more than \$1 million via grants to a dozen New York-based charitable organizations. Aspen is actively involved with [IICF's annual "Week of Giving."](#) a week-long event involving thousands of insurance industry professionals across the United States who volunteer their time to help local charitable organizations in dozens of cities. This year, IICF's Week of Giving is taking place Oct. 8–15, and Aspen will have nearly 100 volunteers across seven cities volunteering for various IICF events and activities. IICF is a fantastic organization, and it's a great example of the charitable DNA throughout the industry, a perfect match for Aspen's focus.

I now chair the U.S. Charity Committee at Aspen U.S. Insurance, and maintain my board seat with the northeast chapter of IICF. I try to motivate and inspire colleagues across Aspen to get involved and recommend charitable organizations they'd like to support in their local communities. Aspen employees often use their VTO days to participate in ADARA and IICF activities, in addition to engagement with other charitable events.

Charity and service remain key priorities for Aspen, and I continue to be grateful to work for an organization that focuses so heavily on giving back. We're looking forward to next month's 'Week of Giving,' and we are hoping to break last year's record by inspiring even more colleagues to donate their time that week for IICF.

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