During this past year, companies across Colorado have encountered new challenges, from financial difficulties to staff members working completely from home. Despite these obstacles, businesses have remained committed to serving their communities, specifically by way of in-kind donations and volunteering for a cause such as Covid-19 relief or social justice.

The Civic 50 2020 Colorado honorees, announced in November, have shown excellence in making corporate citizenship a part of their business and making substantive contributions in the Denver-area community, even during this year of unprecedented changes. COPIC is one of the 2020 honorees.

COPIC’s CSR journey was formally launched in 1991 with the creation of the COPIC Medical Foundation. The Foundation was championed by Harold “Hal” Williamson, COPIC’s first external non-physician board member. He was passionate about philanthropy and encouraged the COPIC board of directors to further give back to the health care community.

COPIC also recognizes how important a companywide initiative to “give back” is, and the internal advantages that result from this. A key role of CSR at COPIC is to further support our mission of improving medicine in the communities we serve.

How did your company start on its corporate social responsibility journey? COPIC’s CSR journey was formally launched in 1991 with the creation of the COPIC Medical Foundation. The Foundation was championed by Harold “Hal” Williamson, COPIC’s first external non-physician board member. He was passionate about philanthropy and encouraged the COPIC board of directors to further give back to the health care community.

Since then, our community engagement programs have grown organically through meaningful and sustainable employee-led efforts.

What advice would you give other companies on how to get started with corporate social responsibility? The best advice would be to start with an internal audit or listening tour to understand what is already happening. Meeting with members of COPIC’s leadership team highlighted that every department touches CSR in a unique way and can contribute to a comprehensive strategy moving forward.

A key to our initial success in developing a more holistic CSR approach was to highlight what COPIC was already doing well, then build on this foundation. We also realized the value of celebrating wins with all employees and continuing to educate them of ongoing CSR efforts and the role they play.

The Civic 50 Colorado 2020 award is supported by CSR Solutions of Colorado, which submitted this Q&A. CSR Solutions of Colorado, a project of Community Shares of Colorado and Spark the Change Colorado, provides companies with the best tools and practices to implement corporate social responsibility. Through this important work, CSR Solutions of Colorado connects companies to great causes, truly highlighting the power of volunteerism and collaboration.

Denver Business Journal edited this story.
Gates Corp. teamed up with Downtown Denver Partnership.

Denver-based, 109-year-old manufacturing firm Gates Corp. released its 2019 sustainability report, saying it achieved a 40% reduction in injuries and made donations to more than 150 nonprofit organizations over the year. More recently, the company has donated $350,000 for Covid-19 relief, $35,000 to Equal Justice Initiative and teamed up with Downtown Denver Partnership to guide tours in the pandemic era’s answer to Bike to Work Day. In 2018, Gates Corp. moved its headquarters into a downtown skyscraper.

Air Methods donated an Airbus helicopter to Mercy Air Africa, a nonprofit that offers flight support in southern Africa for health care, education, disaster relief and other humanitarian purposes. Denver-based Air Methods, which partners with hospitals to provide emergency flight services, has more than 40 years of work under its belt and helps more than 70,000 people each year. The helicopter will undergo major upgrades and modifications over the next few months before going to work in Africa.

Denver-based Tennyson Center for Children announced a merger with Colorado Springs-based Families Together, formerly Foster Together, which aims to help support isolated families. Foster Together was formed in 2017 after founders Hope Forti and her late husband, Kyle — foster parents themselves — saw a need to make fostering children more appealing and an easier process for families.

The rebranding to Families Together illustrates an expanded focus on isolated families, especially at a time when the Covid-19 pandemic is creating more silos for people already facing loneliness and stress, which can be indicators of abuse or neglect. Tennyson Center’s mission focuses on children and families impacted by trauma, and it recently launched a program called Rewiring, which aims to keep families together while reducing the number of kids and families caught up in the child welfare system.

Gates Corp. teamed up with Downtown Denver Partnership.

As a business leader, you know that the hardest climb isn’t Kilimanjaro, Denali or Everest. It’s the CEO’s leadership journey, and it’s fraught with all kinds of challenges and opportunities, setbacks and advances. The good news is you don’t have to go it alone. You can travel with an experienced guide who knows the lay of the land and an elite team of peers who’ve got your back. You can equip yourself with world-class resources to navigate changing environments and uncertain conditions. You can take an approach forged over 60 years and traveled by 100,000+ CEOs of small to midsize businesses around the world. With that kind of support, how high could you ascend?

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