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Volunteer of the Year Uses Contracting Experience to Benefit the Poor

Fifteen years ago, Steve Brown was asked by a San Fernando Valley charity called MEND if he could loan some of his warehouse space for their annual Christmas Basket Program that serves more than 1000 needy families. Scores of volunteers set up shop in Brown's building, and he was amazed at their dedication and efficiency in wrapping toys and preparing food baskets. Since then, Brown has served MEND in a variety of capacities, twice as President of the Board of Directors, and through several committees and projects, most significantly on its current capital expansion committee.

After the October 18, 2004 fire at the MEND Center, Brown took an entire week off of work to supervise the clean-up and construction crews, using his many years of experience in contracting to get the agency operating again quickly.

"Being board president has been the most rewarding to me," says Steve. He served his first term as president in the mid- 90's. At that time MEND was doubling the size of its current facility. By his second term in 2004, Steve donned his construction hat once again and oversaw the purchase of land for a

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new building so that MEND could triple its program capacity based on the agency's growth and future plans. He has also donated countless hours to work with the city, the architect, zoning officials, and others to make MEND's plans for a 40,000 square-foot additional building a reality.

"With MEND's capital expansion project, the timing of Steve Brown's presidency couldn't be better. He comes to us with many years of professional experience in real estate sales and development, as well as property and construction management. Without his tenacious help, we would never have been able to secure the land we have purchased, nor could we have moved forward with the development of our new building," states Marianne Haver Hill, MEND Executive Director.

Over the years, Brown says he has met a lot of good people through his MEND experiences, both volunteers and clients. He also notes that he has become more aware of poverty issues in Los Angeles, and as a result, he has become more caring and giving. Brown believes he is motivated to do his volunteer services by the low-income people MEND assists.

When Steve Brown isn't volunteering at MEND, he manages real estate and owns several retail stores. He is married and has three grown children.

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