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A Business Titan's Softer Side.

The generosity of every person who donates money regardless of the sum demonstrates a gesture of kindness. But, when an organization that is associated with a multi-million-dollar corporation gives hundreds of thousands of dollars to charity, yet does so without expecting or desiring to have, say a room or program named after them in return, that is the epitome of altruism. The Peter and Jeri Dejana Family Foundation is just such an organization.

Instead of taking the entire lump sum of their charitable contribution budget to one cause, the Foundation has decided to give to a broad range of charities that span across many different types of causes.

“When we decided to formalize our giving, we started looking at the types of organizations we wanted to support,” said Foundation Founder Peter Dejana. “While we tend to focus our efforts on human services and education, there are so many worthy causes to choose from that we didn’t want to limit ourselves.”

As Founder and President of the Dejana “family” of companies, Peter Dejana is a brilliant and very successful businessman. Turning a family landscaping business into a national company with hundreds of employees that continues to enjoy exponential growth each year is no simple task, particularly in these economic times. Yet, Dejana believes strongly in giving back.

The Dejana family has been generously donating money to various causes for years. Earlier this year, they decided to formalize their contributions. Founding the Peter and Jeri Dejana Family Foundation helped provide focus to their giving. Well, if you consider donating to over 30 local and regional charities across more than dozen different categories focused, then, yes, they are focused.

The list of organizations the Foundation has given to in its first year alone is dizzying. Just a few examples of the heartfelt organizations the Foundation is assisting include: the Marty Lyons Foundation that fulfills special wishes of children diagnosed with terminal or life-threatening illnesses; the Wounded Warrior Project, whose key mission is to ensure that wounded service members are well adjusted and honored, as they should be; the Lexiebean Foundation that helps families of children with cancer by providing financial and emotional assistance, while also comforting the children afflicted; Long Island University and a multitude of other institutions of higher learning and primary schools through direct grants and individual scholarships; the Port Washington Senior Citizens Center that provides seniors with hot, nutritious lunches, exercise classes and many other programs.

“Peter is a real softie when it comes to helping others,” added Dejana Foundation Grant Distributor Jim Avena. “From helping people by supporting organizations that are looking for a cure to cancer to helping students with education expenses at every age to ensuring our senior citizens have hot, nutritious lunches and helping to enhance the open spaces of our County parks—that is what Peter Dejana and our Foundation are all about. Being involved with this organization is the most rewarding thing I’ve ever done.”

The Foundation doesn’t believe in just making donations and walking away. Part of its goal is to help to extend awareness of the organizations and what they offer so that other potential donors might become

interested in helping as well. “Helping them become more broadly known and helping with some of their fundraising efforts is part of our overall mission,” added Dejana. “It helps them to help themselves along with us helping them. That becomes a win-win all around.”

A website is in development (visit dejanafoundation.org soon) that, of course, covers the Foundation itself. But, in customary Peter Dejana style, a great deal of the site is dedicated to promoting the recipient organizations. The “Organizations We Support” link includes an overview of each organization’s mission, along with their contact information and links to their website, where available. The “Help Support Our Causes” link encourages interested parties to get involved in myriad ways to help these worthy organizations in their fundraising and other efforts.

For more information about the Peter and Jeri Dejana Family Foundation, call Grant Distributor Jim Avena at 516-637-4065.