Last fall marked our third annual Season of Service initiative, which entails coordinating opportunities for our employees to participate in volunteer events in the weeks leading up to Thanksgiving. It’s a way to strengthen employees’ connections with each other, with RMB, and with our communities. As a firm, serving those in need is part of who we are, so it’s no surprise that many of our employees are personal champions of a philanthropic organization. This article highlights just a few of the charitable causes that RMB supports as a result of our colleagues’ impassioned involvement.

Alzheimer’s Association

Mission: “To eliminate Alzheimer’s disease through the advancement of research; to provide and enhance care and support for all affected; and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health.”

Don Bechter, partner and managing director, was driving past the Colorado chapter of the Alzheimer’s Association when he impulsively stopped in to learn more. Three years before, his father had been diagnosed with Alzheimer’s and had since been moved in and out of memory centers while Don and his family struggled to deal with the turmoil caused by the disease. Don spent an hour with the chapter CEO talking about the organization and came away saying he’d love to help out if he could. A few weeks later, he was on the development committee. Six months later, he was on the board. Now, six years later, he’s wrapping up his second year as board chair.

During those six years, the association has seen its funding increase from $400 million to $2 billion, getting the association closer to “the critical mass you need to make a dent and get to real breakthroughs,” according to Don. Also over that time, our Denver team has participated in the last six annual Walk to End Alzheimer’s events, the world’s largest Alzheimer’s fundraiser, held across 600 communities nationwide. Last October, the team raised over $5,000 in the Walk, helping to raise awareness and fund Alzheimer’s research.

Don will be cycling off the board this year, due to term limits laid out by the association. “Don’s personal and professional leadership style has been an inspiration for the Colorado Chapter,” Jim Herlihy, director of communications at the Association, told me. “We are hopeful that he will remain active with us, continuing to provide the direction and credibility that he’s become known for.” Knowing firsthand how critically important this cause is, Don certainly plans to.

The First Tee of Benton Harbor

Mission: “The mission of The First Tee of Benton Harbor is to positively impact the lives of our local youth by providing educational programs that build character, instill life-enhancing values, and promote future potential through the game of golf.”

For the last two years, in conjunction with the Senior PGA Championship in Benton Harbor, MI, RMB has hosted a gathering at local North Pier brewery. For every beer purchased, RMB made an equivalent donation to The First Tee of Benton Harbor.

According to Ebon Sanders, executive director at First Tee, “The support we get from RMB allows us to run Coalition, a post-high school prep program that introduces kids to different universities and colleges, prepares them to take college entrance exams, and organizes community giveback projects. Our goal is to help prepare them for life after high school, whether that’s going to college, joining the »
First Tee also uses golf as a way to positively support youth in Benton Harbor. “First Tee provides kids with a support network of accomplished adults while also teaching them a sport they can play for the rest of their lives,” said Paul Joyaux, partner and senior wealth advisor at RMB and First Tee board member. “It’s a great cause that also gives us an opportunity to be involved with the community in Southwest Michigan, which is important to us.”

**Greater Chicago Food Depository (GCFD)**

Mission: “The Greater Chicago Food Depository is Chicago’s food bank. We provide food for hungry people while striving to end hunger in our community.”

Ian Doll, wealth advisor at RMB, was born and raised in Chicago and has always been proud of the cuisine the city is known for. “It’s a great food city, that’s part of our heritage, so getting involved with the Depository seemed like a natural fit.” Four or five years ago, Ian started volunteering at GCFD by sorting and repacking food for distribution to the community. He was so impressed with the organization and its work that he joined the associate board and started organizing food drives at RMB around the holidays.

RMB has been a supporter of the Depository since 2006, but our involvement has ramped up in recent years, thanks in no small part to Ian’s enthusiasm. “Over the past two years, 130 RMB employees have given a total of 357 hours of their time volunteering at the organization’s facility,” Alexandra Funk, senior manager at GCFD, told me. “RMB has raised $3,000 through its fundraising participation in the annual LunchTime to End Hunger® campaign, helping to provide healthy food for the men, women, and children who rely on our network for assistance every day.”

Early in 2017, Tony Cortina and Josh Young, both wealth advisors in our D.C. office, met with the professional advisors committee at the Greater Washington Community Foundation (GWCF). To get younger people involved in the organization and community, Tony and Josh proposed starting a young professional advisors committee (YPAC) for GWCF. “It was really well received,” Tony told me. “They didn’t have any young people engaged in the organization and were excited about the idea.”

That summer, we hosted a kickoff event for the YPAC, with over 60 young professionals meeting on the rooftop of RMB’s D.C. office to learn more about the foundation. It led to a webinar in the fall of 2018, featuring a Donor Advised Funds 101 class and other education-focused events. The YPAC now has over 100 participants and is still growing.

“I’ve been really amazed by how many people in our generation are interested in learning more about charitable giving,” Tony said. “They may not yet have the resources to donate much on their own, but they want to learn how to better serve their clients, which helps to further the cause of the foundation.”

**La Rabida Children’s Hospital**

Mission: “Dedicated to maintaining and improving the quality of life for each of our patients with complex conditions, disabilities, and chronic illness.”

When Richard Burridge Sr., chairman emeritus at RMB, began his career, he set out to find an organization that would help him give back to the community. “I was very determined,” he told me. “I decided I would rather do something meaningful with just a few organizations than a lot of stuff with a lot of organizations. That’s how I came to La Rabida.”

Dick Sr. served on La Rabida’s board of directors for 48 years, including many years as chairman of the board. He helped guide the endowment and provided his own financial support as the organization grew. “It’s amazing to see the progress they’ve made in serving young people.”
They take some of the most underserved children and work with them for years (sometimes 10 or 15) to improve their quality of life.”

When Dick made the decision to retire from the board a few years ago, he wanted someone from RMB to take his spot. That’s when Julie Vander Weele, partner and managing director, stepped in. “I met Brenda Wolf, the CEO, at a dinner about five years ago,” Julie said, “and she told me something that really stuck with me. She said when they give kids medicine that needs to be refrigerated, they need to make sure there’s a refrigerator at home. That’s the sort of financial situation these kids are in.”

Dick remains an honorary trustee of La Rabida and was honored by the hospital with a Lifetime of Service award last November. About carrying the torch for the next generation, Julie said, “It’s not something I take lightly. La Rabida serves the neediest of the kids—those that don’t have anywhere else to go—and the Burridges have been helping them do that for half a century. We at RMB want to support La Rabida’s mission for the next half century and beyond.”

5 “About,” La Rabida Children’s Hospital, https://larabida.org/about/.