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## Grocery retailer

*educates young people with Healthy Eaters program*

By Ken Levy ■ Special to the IBR



Photo by Ken Levy

The Albertsons/Supervalu Volunteers in Action Council includes, from left, Becky Slighter, analyst; Curtis Stoddard, sourcing manager; Karen Grist, department specialist in community relations; Stacey Nelson-Kumar, community relations manager, and Brooke Lacey, IT specialist.

**F**or Albertsons/Supervalu, the phrase "Putting your money where your mouth is" takes on a literal meaning.

The company, which focuses its philanthropic efforts on programs that are designed to help eliminate child obesity and hunger, invests in tomorrow by educating youngsters and their parents about the benefits of eating healthy. It sponsors the touring Healthy Eaters program, targeted at educating youngsters from kindergarten to fourth grade on healthy-eating habits.

"During the tour, participants have the opportunity to talk about the nutritional benefits of certain foods and sample products they may not have tried before,

such as soy milk and star fruit," said Stacey Nelson-Kumar, community relations manager for Albertsons/Supervalu in Boise.

Students also learn how to read cereal labels and how to make a healthy turkey roll-up snack, she said.

The program made 985 stops in 2008. Of those, 170 stops reached about 3,500 Idaho youngsters. Overall, more than 20,000 children across the Northwest, including Idaho, Oregon, Washington, Montana, Wyoming and Utah participated.

Rather than lecture the youngsters, the Healthy Eaters program provided "fun, hands-on activities that really made a difference in the kids' and parents'

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healthy buying decisions," said Stephanie Worrell of Red Sky Public Relations in Boise.

Albertsons/Supervalu also worked with customers during the last holiday season to help fight hunger with its Turkey Bucks program.

"Each holiday season, Albertsons partners with customers to provide turkey meals to families in need," said Nelson-Kumar. "Dollars are raised at the checkstand and used to provide the meals to local community food bank partners. Throughout the Northwest last year, we delivered 27,312 meals to help feed 109,000 people. In Idaho, more than 5,000 meals were delivered to help feed 19,500 people."

The program, which raised more than \$1.2 million, continues this year.

"In addition to the contributions by customers, Albertsons/Supervalu donates many hours of labor, organization skills and resources that make the program work," Worrell said.

"Albertsons/Supervalu was our top corporate donor (for 2008-2009)," said Sally Zive, president and CEO of the United Way of Treasure Valley. The company raised more than \$469,000 during that time, and donated many hours to programs such as United Way's Direct Impact Response Team (DIRT).

The company was also instrumental in launching United Way's Born Learning-School Readiness initiative that helps prepare low-income, high-risk kids in the Treasure Valley for kindergarten, Zive said.

"Now in its third year, the program is taking place at Title I elementary schools in the Boise, Kuna, Nampa and Caldwell school districts," said Zive.

Albertsons/Supervalu also sponsored United Way's Alternative Spring break volunteer project for 100 high school students from the Treasure Valley, Zive said.

"The students spent two days during spring break remodeling homes, building community gardens and a basketball court, and painting a mural at Farmway Village, a low-income housing community near Caldwell," she said.

Albertsons/Supervalu supports and sponsors the annual Albertsons Boise Open, "which gives back over \$1 million a year," said Worrell.

Internally, the company sponsors its Volunteers In Action council in Boise. About 20 associates serve on the council "to help plan internal, external and United Way volunteer activities for the campus," said Nelson-Kumar. "In addition, each store across the Northwest

has a VIA captain who helps facilitate community service for store associates."

In 2009, Albertsons celebrated its 70th Anniversary and set a goal of completing 70 volunteer projects across the Northwest by the end of the fiscal year in February 2010.

"Albertsons is proud to support the local communities where customers and associates work and live, and the goal to complete 70 projects celebrates that legacy," Nelson-Kumar said.

Overall, the company donated more than \$2 million throughout Idaho in 2008, according to Worrell.

"Philanthropy for Albertsons/Supervalu goes beyond a fiscal donation and name recognition," Worrell said. "From programs combating childhood obesity, providing speakers for local nonprofit events, volunteerism - these are all examples of how they reach beyond their pocketbook."