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CEO says corporate donations necessary

Supervalu leader Jeff Noddle exhorts companies to support communities while doing right by shareholders.

The Idaho Community Foundation's 20th annual luncheon Tuesday at Boise Centre on The Grove celebrated community. Jeff Noddle, CEO of Supervalu, the parent company of Albertsons, was keynote speaker and commented on the size and enthusiasm of the crowd, which filled a large ballroom. Noddle is stepping down as CEO, but will serve as executive chairman of the Minneapolis-based company for at least one year before he departs. The foundation includes more than 400 funds throughout the state.

The organization has reached into every corner of Idaho during its two decades and given a range of grants, from hundreds of dollars to a high school in need of a new pottery kiln, to thousands of dollars for organizations like the Silver Wood Good Samaritan Center in North Idaho.

One project funded by the foundation got special note Tuesday: a film shot at the Warhawk Air Museum in Nampa. The film features local veterans telling students about their World War II experiences. A screening of a clip from the film inspired lunch guests to give a standing ovation to its stars, the veterans, many of whom were present.

Ann Murdoch accepted the 2009 Friend of the Foundation award for her parents, Bob and Barbara Troxell. The Troxell family has established three funds within the Idaho Community Foundation.

Murdoch spoke of the strong philanthropic spirit in her family that started with her father when he was a young man. A neighbor paid his way to law school, and Troxell went on to become a founding partner of the Boise law firm, Hawley Troxell Ennis & Hawley.

He believed in giving back to the community because of the generosity the community had shown him, Murdoch said. Her mother was also deeply involved with the family foundation, until her death, just weeks ago, at age 100.

The community foundation hasn't escaped the tough economy. The return on its investments in 2008 was a negative 32 percent. That's disappointing, but in line with what similar organizations are experiencing, foundation officials said. A corporate philosophy of giving is especially important now, Noddle said. "In this challenging economy, families are in crisis and communities are cutting costs," he said. "It used to be that these issues were across town. Now they're right down the street."

Corporations face the challenge of supporting their communities while they do right by their shareholders, Noddle said. Supervalu is a donor to the Idaho Community Foundation and was the largest contributor to United Way of Treasure Valley last year. The company also sponsors the annual Boise Open golf tournament, scheduled for Sept. 14-20. The tournament has raised \$10 million through the years for organizations including the Special Olympics Idaho, the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation and many more.