

Community involvement is a core value at Baird

Baird is receiving the 2019 Deloitte Wisconsin 75's Distinguished Performer Community Award.

Guy Bolton

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For the past 10 years, Baird has organized an event that encourages employees to volunteer with community organizations during a set week.

Last May, almost 2,200 employees participated in the annual Baird Gives Back Week, spending time tutoring students, preparing and serving food, building homes and doing maintenance work.

The event is one example of Baird's commitment to the communities where its employees work.

"It's just a way to demonstrate Baird's strong commitment to giving back and that we want our associates to be involved in the communities where they live and work," said Audrey Warner, director of Baird Foundation.

Being involved in their communities has become part of the firm's culture.

Baird, founded in 1919 and based in Milwaukee, employs about 4,500 people worldwide. The financial firm is employee-owned and more than two-thirds of its employees are stockholders. It also has

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been on Fortune magazine's annual list of "100 Best Companies to Work For" every year since 2004.

Baird Gives Back Week enables employees to learn about a nonprofit organization that



Thalia Aleman, a technology solutions specialist at Baird, reads with a student at the United Community Center's Bruce-Guadalupe Community School during Baird Gives Back Week. (Photo: Baird)

they may not have been aware of, Warner said. And it often leads to their becoming involved with the organizations.

Every employee is given two days a year of paid time to volunteer with a community organization, and managers can approve requests for commitments that require much more time.

Baird even has a resource group to help employees find organizations that they can help.

Every employee also is eligible to receive a matching contribution, ranging from \$500 to \$1,000 each year, made to eligible nonprofit organizations. The Baird Foundation matched more than \$1 million in contributions in 2018.

In all, Baird Foundation gave \$4.1 million that year to nonprofit organizations in

education, the arts, health and human services across the country.

That's in addition to its annual campaigns for the United Way of Greater Milwaukee and the United Performing Arts Fund. There also are events such as its Welcome Event this year, in which employees and retirees, as well as spouses and partners, packed 3,000 backpacks with personal care items that were donated to United Way organizations in Milwaukee and eight other cities.

All this is only a sampling. But it suggests the emphasis that Baird puts on community involvement — and the work that it does to show employees that giving back is one of the firm's core values.

"The community," Warner said, "is an integral part of who Baird is."