ORIX USA’s Christine Jha Impacts Lives Through her Involvement with Community Council

At first glance, you may not realize the common link between Head Start of Greater Dallas, the Volunteer Center of North Texas and The Concilio. Upon closer inspection, though, you’ll discover that each of these organizations—along with dozens of others—were the brainchild of the Community Council of Dallas.

Launched in 1940, the Community Council was one of the first social-service operations in Dallas. Its mission: identify services needed in the community, and then meet those challenges by incubating new programs or agencies, deploying volunteers, conducting research, expanding government programs or a host of other activities depending on the situation. Basically, the Community Council brings together the players and resources needed to create solutions for issues our city faces, such as juvenile delinquency, the well-being of seniors and public health.

Though the organization works largely behind the scenes, it caught the attention of Christine Jha, Deputy Chief Financial Officer for ORIX USA. While participating in Leadership Dallas—the Dallas Regional Chamber’s leadership development program—Christine learned about the Community Council from a fellow participant. When the organization began looking for board members, he recommended her.

That was almost three years ago, and since then, Christine has worn many hats during her time on the board: She sits on the audit and finance committee, serves as the board nominating chair and recently led the search committee for the new CEO—one of her proudest accomplishments. “It was such a monumental decision because the CEO is such an important role,” Christine says. “When we found the right person, I had such a feeling of accomplishment because you’re changing the course of an organization—you’re being impactful.”

And that impact reverberates throughout the organization as it works to design programs focused on benefiting groups like at-risk youth and seniors.
Take the 2-1-1 program, for example. Run by the Community Council, this telephone referral service allows anyone in Texas to call 2-1-1 for free information and referrals to health and human service agencies, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, disaster relief resources and volunteer opportunities.

Since children are a main focus of the Community Council, you can see why the Community Youth Development program was born. Offered in areas where juvenile arrest rates rank among the highest in the state, the after-school program is designed to inspire at-risk youth through mentoring and leadership development opportunities.

“Also popular among youngsters: the annual Get Kidz Fit festival, which celebrated its 10th year last April. Families are invited to the wellness and nutrition expo to learn about exercise and healthy food options, all while participating in cooking demos, obstacle courses, bounce houses, dance parties and more. Volunteers are always welcome for events like this.

As our aging population grows, the Community Council’s focus on seniors will continue to increase. Currently, the organization operates the Dallas Area Agency on Aging, a department responsible for advocating and coordinating resources for seniors and their caregivers. Residential repair, home-delivered meals, and personal assistance are just a few ways this department is making a difference.

“The Community Council has been around for over 75 years, but we’re now in the midst of sharpening our focus and centralizing our resources to provide real benefits to the two groups we target above all else—senior citizens and children/youths,” says Ken Goodgames, CEO of the Community Council of Dallas. “We’re on a mission locally to become known as a convener, not a competitor, with all of the other nonprofit resources that North Texas has to offer. The multiple venues of outreach we offer to our clients are not only important, but also provide a deeply rewarding experience.”

And seeing the impact that Community Council makes is what keeps Christine motivated. In between the time she spends with the organization (if you have potential board candidates, please let her know!), she also manages to squeeze in time to hang out with her lovable cat and play sports like golf and table tennis. It’s clear, though, that giving back remains a top priority.

“It can be easy to get wrapped up in the day-to-day grind and forget to take a step back and realize how fortunate we are,” Christine says. “Through my board activity, I get the chance to
impact someone’s life because they don’t have a resource. It makes me appreciate all of the things I’ve been afforded in life.”

*Written by Amanda Gleason, Marketwave*