

Active in the Community

An Interview with Joe Allen,
Senior Vice President, Employee Communications
and Community Affairs, Active International

EDITORS' NOTE Joe Allen heads the philanthropic efforts of Active International through its Active Cares program. The company has supported more than 600 community organizations, both in New York and around the country. Joe received his B.A. from Queens College of the City University of New York. He has a wide range of journalistic experience, including as a reporter, magazine publisher, cable television studio manager, and radio talk show host. He has also headed



Joe Allen

his own public relations firm. Allen is the co-author of *Goodbye for Always: The Triumph of the Innocents, a book about hidden children during the Holocaust*. He has also been an adjunct lecturer at St. Thomas Aquinas College, teaching a course in writing for the media. Allen is the President of People to People, Rockland County's largest food pantry, serves on the board of directors of the Rockland Business Association, American Heart Association, Good Samaritan Hospital Foundation and Rockland County Police Chiefs Foundation. He is a board member of the American Cancer Society Golf Challenge as well as past Chairman of the American Heart Association's Heart Walk.

COMPANY BRIEF Founded 25 years ago and based in Pearl River, New York, Active International (www.activeinternational.com) is recognized as the global leader in corporate trade, providing financial benefits to Fortune 500 companies in virtually every industry. The company acquires underperforming assets – including surplus inventory, real estate, and capital equipment – at up to full original value, in exchange for cash and/or a trade credit, which is used to offset future operating expenses. With offices in 11 countries, Active has led the industry in the development of new standards of excellence for the acquisition of assets, the effective remarketing of those assets, and the provision of an efficient means for its clients to use their trade credits. Since 1984, Active has created more than \$1.5 billion in cash savings for its extensive client base.

How important is community responsibility and engagement at Active, and how have you worked to make it a part of your culture?



Active believes, as a core philosophy, that it's important for corporations to remain engaged in those activities that support the common good within their own communities. Statistics show that clients prefer to work with companies that are socially engaged, and that employees feel more positive about their companies if they are socially engaged.

We have set up a structure by which any employees who are involved in cause-related activities in their communities can come to Active Cares – which is the charitable arm of the company – and request that we support them in their endeavors in their communities.

We also sponsor quite a few organizations and events in the county where our headquarters is located. In fact, we're involved with about 150 in any given year. We tend to back organizations on three levels: one is by directly helping people with the urgent needs they might have on a particular day. For instance, we might help activist organizations that assist people facing violence in the home, or those organizations that get people food, shelter, or medicine; second is supporting the organizations that are there to help people with issues that aren't crisis-oriented, such as helping with their housing or child care needs; and third is supporting organizations that provide programs that help the community over time, such as education, or the arts, or keeping young people off the streets. But of those three, definitely the organizations that are helping people in crisis are most important to us. In fact, the local shelter for victims of violence against women, the Rockland Family Shelter, was the first organization we ever participated with under the banner of Active Cares.

You undertook a major endeavor with the Active International Cardiovascular Institute. What drew you to that project, and how has it developed?

While discussing an unrelated issue with the hospital administration, we learned that they were winning the fight to get the certificate of need to build a cardiovascular surgical center in Good Samaritan Hospital in Suffern, New York. During the course of the conversation,

we discussed various sponsorships, including the naming rights, and when I learned that they were available, I started talking to management at Active. What made the project come to life was the fact that they were going to be saving lives right here in our community – it was as pure and simple as that. For more than two years now, the Active International Cardiovascular Institute has been saving lives. They have performed about 600 open-heart surgeries. There are 370 people at Active, and the institute has already directly impacted a number of them through family members, friends, or people they know in the community who have been cared for by the institute. It was important for us, and especially for our CEO Alan Elkin and our President Art Wagner, to be active participants in their own community and they are, by truly helping to save lives.

During these challenging times, are there key areas that Active International is most focused on to ensure that you're able to continue having a significant impact?

Yes, we are looking for ways to use Active's corporate trading model to help companies that want to get involved or be more involved with organizations in their community. We want to make sure that people who are hungry are getting fed, people who are in violent situations are getting helped, and people who are homeless are finding shelter. These things are important to any community, but are even more important now that we are in times of great economic difficulty. In an economy like this one, companies need to be more resourceful on every level, including how they conduct their philanthropy programs. Using our trading model, which has been in place for 25 years, we can help companies in their community participation. This might take the form of donating the inventories we acquire, helping them with their advertising, or generating additional donations. There's a whole range of the activities that Active conducts in the for-profit part of our business that we are bringing to the nonprofit side, all to benefit charities across the country. ●

The ribbon cutting for the Active International Cardiovascular Institute