

Supporting Kids and Education

An Interview with Joseph Gromek,
President and Chief Executive Officer, Warnaco Group, Inc.



EDITORS' NOTE In April 2003, Joe Gromek assumed his current role at Warnaco Group, Inc. Formerly the President and CEO of Brooks Brothers Inc., from 1996 to 2002, Gromek has also held senior management positions with Saks Fifth Avenue, Limited Brands, and Ann Taylor Stores Corporation. He is a member of the board of directors of Volunteers of America and a member of the board of governors of Parsons The New School for Design.



Joseph Gromek

COMPANY BRIEF Warnaco Group, Inc. (www.warnaco.com), designs, sources, and markets a broad line of intimate apparel, sportswear, and swimwear worldwide under brand names including Warner's, Olga, Calvin Klein, Speedo, and Chaps. Warnaco's products are distributed domestically and internationally, primarily to wholesale customers through multiple distribution channels.

What role does corporate responsibility play at Warnaco, and how has the Warnaco Foundation evolved?

As a global citizen, Warnaco has a civic responsibility to reinvest in the communities in which we operate, and one of the ways that

is possible is through the Warnaco Foundation, which was established last year. The mission of the foundation is to support kids and education, which we believe is fundamental to the success of our civilization. We have embarked on programs in communities where we have a presence, both domestically and internationally, and it has been incredibly well-received by our employees around the world.

How did you decide to focus on education in your philanthropic endeavors, and did you engage your employees in your decision?

It was our associates, through an advisory council, who were integral in guiding the focus of the foundation. After identifying children and education as its primary emphasis, our team presented several potential recipients. We worked diligently vetting the different domestic and international organizations, and ultimately selected partners that fit our criteria. We wanted to make a difference and see that difference, so at the local level we selected organizations with whom we can physically partner on projects, allowing our employees to get directly involved, creating a real connection between our company and the groups we are involved with. To date, this has been a very rewarding process.



Your business is global and you've had strong growth overseas. Are your philanthropic programs also global?

Absolutely. More than half of our business is done outside the U.S., and the majority of our products are sourced outside the U.S., so it was very important we focus on communities worldwide.

Have you put an emphasis on getting employees out in the community, and is it important they understand the company's dedication to community?

The benefit to partnering with several organizations, ranging from global to local in scope, was to give our employees the opportunity to volunteer their time, in addition to the financial commitment of the company. It's our desire to provide comp time to our teams around the country and around the world, to encourage volunteerism and partake in experiences with these organizations. In the metropolitan New York area, for example, we're involved with the Madison Square Boys & Girls Club and New York Cares. Our employees have participated in educational field trips, social events, and reading programs. Currently, we're working with the Boys & Girls Club on a teen fashion show, helping students develop that expertise. These kinds of opportunities help foster the desired culture within our company.

The current economy puts a strain on foundation work. How critical is it for the company to maintain these programs and stay focused?

As a public company, we understandably have to be sensitive to the current economic realities, but it's absolutely essential to maintain these programs in whatever scale is appropriate. The foundation is a long-term commitment, not a one-year project, and based on that, through a combination of financial support, volunteerism, and company interest, all of those factors will be long lasting.

Did you know early on that you wanted to encourage corporate responsibility and community as the leader of this company?

As a leading global apparel company, it just makes sense to fulfill our civic obligations. Everyone has been very responsive to these initiatives and I'm very proud of our team. ●

Kids receive homework assistance and social, cultural, and recreational programming from the Explorer Academy, sponsored by Warnaco.