

## Fostering “Go-Givers”

An Interview with Harriet Martin,  
Senior Vice President-Office of Community Affairs, USAA

**EDITORS' NOTE** Harriet Martin has held her current post since March 2013. Prior to this, she held various roles with USAA, including Vice President and General Manager, Phoenix campus; Assistant Vice President-Human Resources; and Assistant Vice President-Sales and Service Operations. She graduated with a B.A. in Business Administration and Management from Liberty University and started her career at USAA as an entry-level Member Service Representative, answering phones and serving USAA members.



Harriet Martin

**COMPANY BRIEF** United Services Automobile Association and its affiliates (collectively referred to as USAA; [usaa.com](http://usaa.com)) make up one of America's leading financial services organizations. USAA has been serving military families since 1922 and offers its 10.3 million members a comprehensive range of insurance, banking, investment and retirement products, financial advice and planning, and services designed to help them meet their financial needs. Headquartered in San Antonio, Texas, USAA owns or manages assets of \$205.6 billion.

### What has made USAA so special for you and a place where you've wanted to be for your entire career?

First and foremost, I feel fortunate to be a part of USAA. It operates solely to fulfill its mission, which is to facilitate the financial security of the military community and their family members.

We really do care about our members and make business decisions to take care of the military community. The authenticity behind our mission fulfillment does jazz me.

I have experienced and seen the mission focus, regardless of leadership level, and this has always been consistent.

### Are you surprised by how intense the focus on the mission is, and does that become more challenging as one grows with the company?

Companies that fail seem to erode the focus on their mission because they don't realize that it's the secret weapon to sustaining success.

With USAA and our unwavering focus, we are fully aware that if we take care of our members, they will take care of USAA. Also, the better you take care of your workforce, the better the workforce takes care of the members, and the stronger USAA becomes. The stronger USAA

is, the better we are able to fulfill our mission.

### USAA has a diverse customer base. How critical is it for your workforce to mirror that diversity?

USAA has maintained a long-standing commitment to cultivating a diverse and inclusive workforce, and we focus on leveraging a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and cultures. At the same time, we're on a journey, and we're not where we should be. We still have to make further progress.

We strive to have a workforce that is representative of the military community, not just through hiring prior military service members, but also as it relates to our experiences and our diversity. This equips us to better serve our members and to drive better business positions.

### How has the mentoring program at USAA affected your career?

The only reason I'm here today in this role is that multiple individuals have supported me, nurtured me, and cultivated me as I became the leader I am today. This is not a one-person show and, in any environment, it's rare if a single individual drives his or her own personal success.

Within the USAA culture, we're acutely aware of “the shadow of the leader,” and that is one of the focal points of our culture. Mentoring is powerful and starts at the very top with our CEO. We believe that when senior leadership walks the talk, we are able to cultivate and develop a strong internal workforce.

### What advice do you give young women just starting their careers?

The advice I give is that to achieve success, you have to realize it's not about you. My favorite leadership book, *The Go-Giver*, is my leadership mantra and aspiration. It focuses on five laws for stratospheric success, each reinforcing the message that true success is gained through focusing on the other party winning and on the other individual's needs.

What I've seen in my 25 years of work experience is that “go-giver” instead of “go-getter” practices are at the heart of the USAA mission and how we do business. We focus on making sure our members and the military community are better off because of their relationship with USAA.

### You oversee corporate responsibility and community engagement. How have you directed these efforts?

Our sole purpose is to leverage the time, the talent, and the treasure within USAA to have a positive effect on society. What's so rewarding about our approach to philanthropic support and community affairs is that we are not involved with trying to gain recognition. We truly are focused on the community and on making it better due to its relationship with USAA. In the same way we want our membership to be better off because of its relationship with USAA and we bring that theme into our philanthropic work.

### Do the areas you support philanthropically align with the business?

As we work to evolve and become even more impactful with our community engagement and corporate responsibility, we want to make sure we're aligned with USAA's mission and purpose in order to create greater scale and impact.

### What structure do you have in place to deploy your philanthropic assets?

The assets we have in Community Affairs are channeled from two private, nonprofit organizations – the USAA Foundation Inc., which distributes philanthropic contributions across the nation, and The USAA Educational Foundation – and through our volunteer and student success programs.

All of these are aimed on supporting the military community and the communities in which we live and work, as well as on making a societal impact.

Specifically, in 2013, 7,600 employees, their families, and retiree volunteers reported 417,000 combined hours of volunteering. Also, in 2013, the USAA Federal Savings Bank and The USAA Foundation contributed more than \$14.9 million to nonprofit organizations.

Lastly, The USAA Educational Foundation promoted financial literacy within the military community by providing free financial management presentations to 45,000 service members. These are just a few examples of how we deploy our philanthropic assets.

### Are there metrics in place to track impact?

The business takes into consideration ROI, but with the programs of Community Affairs and corporate responsibility, our focus is on ROO – Return on Objective.

We're working to create a corporate responsibility program that spans the nation and will have great impact and, with that, we are trying to create metrics that ensure our philanthropic strategy is aligned with the USAA mission. ●