



MARE ISLAND BREWING CO. LLC
MARE ISLAND, CA

“What do we do about all these donation requests?”

This is a question we asked ourselves repeatedly from the moment we opened our doors. In fact, it started well before that; we were already receiving requests for thousands of dollars of donations before we had sold a single pint. And once we did open the doors, the donation requests kept rolling in ... while we (the founders) weren't even paying ourselves yet.

Frankly, we'd go out of business if we filled all the requests. Heck, we were having difficulties finding the time just to read them all. These were worthy causes coming and asking for help, often times directly from people and groups we know well. We wanted to help; yet we were making enemies and frustrating the hell out of ourselves just trying (and failing) to keep up.

So, we sat down one afternoon and did some serious soul searching on how to approach this existential aspect of our company: philanthropy and supporting our community. We went back to a key ethos of the Mare Island Brewing Co.: to celebrate the rich heritage of Mare Island and to be both spark and fuel for the renaissance of Mare Island and the town and waterfront of Vallejo.

We decided we wanted to be deliberate; we wanted to be proactive rather than reactive. We would get more deeply and meaningfully involved in a few causes that dovetail with our ethos, rather than spread ourselves thin a few random bottles and gift certificates at a time. And, yes, this approach has the added benefit of streamlining the process such that we can be more efficient, allowing us to actually do more. It makes the whole practice more accountable. (And yes, we also believe that a thriving business—employing as many people as possible—is one of the best things we can do for Vallejo; this approach helps us keep our eye on that ball).

So, we have developed a partnership with the Mare Island Historic Parks Foundation and museum, a 501C3 non-profit that performs the daunting and important task of preserving the history of Mare Island. The Foundation was extremely helpful during our launch (many of our photographs are from their archives). They are an obvious and worthy outlet for our philanthropic efforts. We strive to support them financially, logistically, and in sharing and broadcasting their cause.

We also have chosen the Vallejo Waterfront Weekend, as well as the 4th of July Vallejo Waterfront Fireworks display, as key community events to sponsor. Through these two events we can really impact our immediate neighborhood, as well as give back to—and celebrate—the awesomeness of our hometown.

Each year at budget time, we sit down and figure out what we can afford in time, money, effort (and beer), and generously support these targeted philanthropic partners. As we grow as a business, we look to grow our contribution to these causes as well as expand the organizations we support. But for now, it has allowed us to feel proactive, positive, and confident about our efforts.

As for the other donation requests we receive? We point those fine folks to this manifesto. It's not that their causes aren't worthy; it's that our dance card is already full. We have found an approach that we feel allows us to do the most good.

We hope you understand.

Respectfully,

Kent and Ryan