

VW  
FWD



VELA | WOOD **FORWARD**



## OUR PURPOSE

VW FWD's mission is to provide financial resources and volunteer hours to organizations and causes that support justice and equal rights for marginalized communities and to educate and provide opportunities for our employees to become agents of social change.



OUR  
COMMITMENT

# COMMITMENT OVERVIEW



## DONATION

In 2020, we committed to donating \$500,000 over ten years to social justice causes, beginning with \$150,000 pledged over the first three years to institutions specifically focused on supporting Black Americans. To date, we have donated \$200,000 of our \$500,000 pledge.



## AWARENESS & EDUCATION

We committed to engage in regular internal discussion forums via the VW FWD Media Club and learn more about DEI in the workplace. In 2023, we read and discussed the book *Humankind: A Hopeful History* by Rutger Bregman.



## OPPORTUNITY

We committed to provide opportunities to get involved in the communities of the Vela Wood offices through volunteer efforts. In 2023, our Dallas office continued its partnership with Youth Revive through multiple volunteer events and served with the Chris Howell Foundation and the City of Dallas MLK Jr. Community Day of Giving. Our Austin office volunteered with the Central Texas Food Bank, Pease Park Conservancy, Livelihood Projects, and National Alliance on Mental Illness.



## CELEBRATION

We committed to celebrate Juneteenth as an annual firm holiday. We closed the firm on Monday, June 19, 2023 to observe Juneteenth.



## HIRE

We committed to hire minority students from historically Black colleges and universities in Austin and Dallas into available staff positions. In 2023, VW promoted three minority students who had been hired under this program between 2020 and 2022 into the roles of Executive Assistant to the Managing Partner, Legal Assistant, and Operations Assistant.



## PROTEST

We committed to encourage members of our firm to support causes that demand justice for all citizens. In 2023, we financially supported the Texas Access to Justice Commission, which aims to develop and implement initiatives designed to expand access to and enhance the quality of justice in civil legal matters for low-income Texans.



## VOTING AND POLICY AWARENESS

We committed to allow time for and encourage employees to research candidates and policies that support legislation that is important to them. We continued our partnership with the Metroplex Civic and Business Association (MCBA), an organization focused on improving voter turnout and awareness across DFW. We also partnered with IssueVoter, an organization dedicated to giving everyone a voice in our democracy by making civic engagement accessible, efficient, and impactful.



**OUR  
IMPACT**



APPROXIMATELY

# \$50,500

DONATED

# 16

NON-PROFITS  
SUPPORTED



# 10

SCHOLARSHIPS  
AWARDED

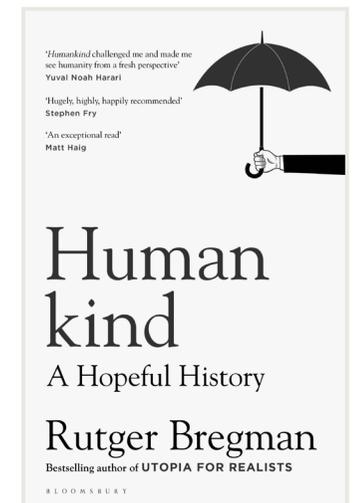


# 11

DAYS OF REIMBURSED  
LUNCHES ORDERED  
FROM MINORITY-  
OWNED RESTAURANTS



WHAT  
WE  
READ





## EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEER EVENTS

VW FWD provides employees in the Dallas and Austin offices with firm-sponsored volunteer events to participate in quarterly. This year, our offices volunteered with the following events and organizations:



**CENTRAL  
TEXAS  
FOOD BANK**



**LIVELIHOOD  
PROJECTS**



**PEASE PARK  
CONSERVANCY**



**NATIONAL  
ALLIANCE  
ON MENTAL  
ILLNESS WALK**



## EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEER EVENTS



- » **CHF THANKSGIVING**  
FOOD DISTRIBUTION  
AND FINANCIAL  
LITERACY EVENT
  
- » **CHF CHRISTMAS**  
FOOD DISTRIBUTION  
& TOYS GIVEAWAY



**CITY OF DALLAS MLK JR.**  
**COMMUNITY CENTER** FOR THEIR  
COMMUNITY DAY OF GIVING



- YOUTH REVIVE'S**
- » MLK JR. MARCH
  - » FAMILY DAY EVENT  
AT THE PEROT
  - » COMMUNITY ACTION  
PROJECT DAY



**OUR**  
**SCHOLARSHIPS**  
**& DONATIONS**



**\$20,000**

FOR **26** BLACK STUDENTS TO ENROLL IN A KAPLAN LSAT PREP COURSE PROGRAM



**10**

SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED IN 2023

Aicha Doume, Aileen Flores, Devin Escalera, Elim Shanko, Eugenie Ishimwe, Halima Samatar, Jasmine Foster, Jordan Boykin, Mildred Verdier, and Mikea Jackson



**\$3,500**

DONATED TO **HUSTON-TILLOTSON UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION**

# OTHER DONATIONS

## CHRIS HOWELL FOUNDATION

The Chris Howell Foundation is a Dallas-based organization that provides programs and services to vulnerable communities that address disparities in health, wellness, and financial literacy.

\$2,500

## ISSUE VOTER

Issue Voter is an Austin-based nonprofit organization that aims to give everyone an effective, easy-to-use digital platform to voice their opinions and play an active role in the policymaking process.

\$1,000

## L.I.R.A. GROUP

L.I.R.A. Group was the Community Sponsor of the City of Dallas MLK Jr. Community Day of Giving, which VW FWD served as a Community Partner. The L.I.R.A. Group is committed to the development, coaching, promoting, and teaching life skills to the poor, underserved youth and young adults.

\$2,000

## TEXAS ACCESS TO JUSTICE COMMISSION

The Texas Access to Justice Commission was created by the Supreme Court of Texas in 2001 and charged with developing and implementing initiatives designed to expand access to and enhance the quality of justice in civil legal matters for low-income Texans.

\$3,750

# OTHER DONATIONS, CONTINUED

## UNPARALLELED PREPARATORY ACADEMY

Unparalleled Preparatory Academy is a career immersion charter school in Manor, Texas. The school focuses on 6th-12th grade students exploring high-wage, high-demand careers, gaining hands-on experience and an entrepreneurial mindset to make informed decisions about their future.

\$5,000

## VENTURE FORWARD

Venture Forward is the National Venture Capital Association's (NVCA) nonprofit organization with a mission to build a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive (DEI) future for venture capital. Venture Forward not only helps aspiring, often historically underrepresented, investors enter the field, but also helps VC investors and firms implement meaningful DEI practices.

\$5,000

## WOMEN BUILDING WEALTH

Women Building Wealth was a full-day event focused on empowering financial literacy for career women. The event gave valuable insights and practical knowledge about budgeting, investing, and achieving financial independence.

\$500

## YOUTH REVIVE

Youth Revive is a Dallas-based nonprofit organization that provides character and civic education to help close the civic empowerment gap for youth in low-income communities. VW FWD also donated 5 used laptops to Youth Revive students.

\$7,500

# EMPLOYEE REQUESTED DONATIONS

## AFRICAN AMERICAN LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

AAI enhances civic awareness and leadership opportunities throughout Central Texas. AAI equips exceptional leaders to live up to their moral responsibility to seek to make life better for everyone.

\$2,000

## AMERICAN GATEWAYS

American Gateways seeks to champion the dignity and human rights of immigrants, refugees and survivors of persecution, torture, conflict and human trafficking through exceptional immigration legal services at no or low cost.

\$1,500

## BRING THE LIGHT MINISTRIES

Bring the Light Ministries is a non-profit dedicated to ending homelessness in Dallas, where challenges like food scarcity and homelessness are prominent. It seeks to be a living example of love in action and spark a movement of hope and transformation.

\$2,500

## CASA JUAN DIEGO

Casa Juan Diego was founded to aid immigrants and refugees uprooted by the realities of the global economy through hospitality and services for immigrant women, men, and children.

\$1,500

# EMPLOYEE REQUESTED DONATIONS, CONTINUED

## DAWA

DAWA provides direct financial support and culturally relevant health-centered programming that focuses on the crucial work of BIPOC community members.

\$2,500

## TEXAS CASA

Texas CASA advocates for effective public policy for children in the child protection system and envisions a safe and positive future for all Texas children.

\$1,000

## UBUNTU LIFE

Ubuntu Life is a nonprofit organization that focuses on providing essential health and education services to children with special needs in Kenya by making high-quality, handmade products that provide sustainable and meaningful employment for the local community.

\$500

## UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND WORK AGENCY

UNRWA provides assistance and protection for registered Palestine Refugees. 2023 was an extremely difficult year for Palestinian refugees. The Gaza war brought extreme violence, displacement, poverty, and dire conditions of life in overcrowded camps. The UNRWA remained committed to serve them across all its fields of operations and in the darkest circumstances.

\$5,000



## BLACK HISTORY MONTH PROGRAM

The Dallas and Austin office sourced lunch from locally Black-owned restaurants (**Brunchaholics** in Dallas and **Watts-That Soul Food & More** in Austin) in order to invest in and support the local community and introduce our employees to food with roots in Black culture. Our VW FWD Fellow organized a presentation on African American history, specifically, the foundation that led to the observance of Black History Month, Black culture's influence on society, Soul Food, and the impact of learning African American history as American history.



## THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS'S MINORITY WOMEN PURSUING LAW EVENT

The UT MWPL is a group of minority female students at UT who are aspiring to become lawyers. They participate in law firm tours each semester and gain knowledge on what it takes to be an attorney. A group of ten students toured the Vela Wood Austin office and participated in a Q+A session with two of our minority women partners, Jenny Young and Chi Reece. We catered this event from **LUXATX**, a black women-owned charcuterie board business. The event was a remarkable success.



Vela Wood pledges to continue to provide opportunities for learning and involvement, foster open conversations and inclusivity, and support institutions focused on supporting Black Americans and other marginalized communities.

**FOR INQUIRIES, CONTACT**

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