

EVENTS / CAUSES

## Michael Kors highlights brand values in CSR effort

August 2, 2012



By TRICIA CARR

Fashion label Michael Kors is allowing its employees to volunteer for New York-based nonprofit God's Love We Deliver during business hours to back the designer's more than 20 years of support for the organization.

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**Luxury Daily**

God's Love We Deliver named July "Michael Kors Month" and is honoring the designer at its awards dinner in October due to the increased volunteer efforts from the label. An out-of-home banner at the organization's headquarters and some social efforts highlight the brand's efforts, but Michael Kors may want to consider consumer involvement to heighten public awareness for its philanthropy.

"Fashion is as an outward expression of one's identity," said Karen Creamer, president of [K2 Brand Consulting](#), Overland Park, KS. "Michael Kors' support of God's Love We Deliver reveals a more holistic approach to the brand as it is sending a message that your belief system is as important as your fashion sense.

"Beyond raising awareness for the Michael Kors brand, this philanthropic partnership elevates what the brand stands for," she said. "It has the potential to evolve it beyond simply a fashion brand and into the humanitarian space.

Ms. Kreamer is not affiliated with Michael Kors, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

**Michael Kors** was not available for comment before press deadline.

Feeding the hungry

Each of Michael Kors' 400 employees can volunteer at the New York headquarters of God's Love We Deliver during the workday to help prepare healthy meals that the organization delivers to people living with life-threatening illnesses.

The designer's longstanding involvement with God's Love We Deliver and its proximity to the area aided by the organization made it a natural fit for the label's corporate responsibility efforts, per Michael Kors.

This is the first company-wide volunteer program at the label. It began July 9.

For the duration of Michael Kors Month in July, the nonprofit's building on the corner of Spring Street and Sixth Avenue in New York displayed a banner to raise awareness for the support from the label.



*Michael Kors banner*

Designer Michael Kors and the label's president/CEO John Idol were among the employees who reported for kitchen duty.

The label posted images of Mr. Kors and other employees volunteering on the label's [Facebook page](#). The organization also posted images of Mr. Kors and the banner on its [Facebook page](#).



*Image of Mr. Kors and employees volunteering*

On Oct. 15, Mr. Kors will be given the 2012 Golden Heart Award for Lifetime Achievement at the God's Love We Deliver annual dinner.

#### Charitable functions

Fashion houses or retailers that take part in philanthropic efforts will likely help their brands align with values outside of the norms of the industry.

In this case, Michael Kors is letting the public know that being involved with a movement firsthand is important to the brand. Company employees are physically volunteering their time, rather than making a monetary donation.

"A high-end fashion brand conveys a certain lifestyle image," Ms. Kreamer said.

"Philanthropic efforts move a brand beyond products to buy to look good and it becomes a platform for doing good."

Quite a few brands let consumers get involved in their in-house charity efforts.

For example, Marc Jacobs Intl. is renewing its commitment to the battle against HIV/AIDS through the creation of T-shirts, the profits of which go towards Aid for AIDS International ([see story](#)).

In addition, Montblanc, a maker of writing instruments and watches, is upping its corporate social responsibility through a Facebook application where fans can buy bracelets with profits going towards the Texas Children's Hospital ([see story](#)).

Also, retailer Barneys New York raised awareness for the new shoe floor at its New York flagship store on Madison Avenue by supporting the Human Rights Campaign with shoe purchase proceeds and a Facebook contest.

The Perfect Pair campaign spanned in-store and online, with Barneys donating 10 percent of sales from the shoe floor for one week and \$1 for every participant in a contest ([see story](#)).

Michael Kors could add to its out-of-home banner placement and small social media push with a complementary in-store campaign to get its consumers involved.

“In addition to the banner and Facebook promotion, the charity should be actively promoted in in-store,” Ms. Kreamer said. “Donating a percentage of product sales would allow Michael Kors customers to contribute to the charity and become part of the larger philanthropic effort.”

Final Take

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