

Loving a city... one neighbor at a time

Can an entire city be challenged to and actually get better at loving its neighbor? Gathering participant **Henry Kaestner** thinks so, and if his success in philanthropy comes even somewhat close to the success he and business partner **David Morken** have had in business, Durham, North Carolina, is going to be very blessed.

Kaestner and Morken are the co-founders of Bandwidth.com, a telecommunications company. They were finalists for the Ernst and Young Entrepreneur of the Year award in 2009 and were each named by *American Venture Magazine* as one of the Top 40 Under 40. But being successful entrepreneurs is not all these two have in common. They also share a faith that compels them to help others and expand the kingdom of God. One of the ways they've chosen to do that is through a non-profit they started in their hometown three years ago called DurhamCares.

Here's what Henry Kaestner had to say about DurhamCares when interviewed by The Gathering:

TG: Where did you get the vision for DurhamCares?

HK: Several years ago I was in a small group study on the subject of calling. As clearly as God has ever spoken to me, I really felt like He was calling me to a life of using whatever technical and entrepreneurial skills I had more directly for the Kingdom, for ministry and for helping people. It was pretty soon after that that the idea of Durham Cares came about.

TG: According to your website, the goal of DurhamCares is to see the people of the city "engaged in serving each other, building relationships across cultural boundaries, and transforming the community through committed involvement." How are you going about that?

HK: We started by doing a survey of 450 households in the Durham area. We found that 64 percent of our population did not volunteer for local charities at all, and only 1.6 percent of income was given to religious organizations or charity. When we realized that the community was under serving the 1400 different charities in Durham, we wanted to create an infrastructure that made it easier for people to give and serve. So, we focus on three things: public awareness, Success Grants, and volunteer matching.

TG: What's involved in your public awareness campaign?

HK: We use billboards, bumper stickers and t-shirts that focus people in Durham on loving their neighbor. Our slogan simply

reads "Love Your Neighbor." Another way we created awareness was by having a DurhamCares team enter a bicycle race called Race Across America. A small team of Durham community leaders raced their bikes across the country in eight days for the purpose of raising funds and volunteer hours for Durham charities. While the team was doing that fulltime, we had stationary bikes set up at the American Tobacco Complex downtown Durham so people could ride along with the team.

The mayor, the city manager and the president of one of our universities all came out and rode. As a result of the campaign, we had 900 people pledge 9000 volunteer hours and over \$105,000 was raised for Durham charities.

TG: Tell us about the very careful approach you take when it comes to matching volunteers with charities.

HK: There's so much drive-by volunteering in our culture today. Someone might be a brilliant accountant or artist and while they can ladle soup with the best of them, these people have God-given interests and talents that are needed desperately by certain charities. So, we try to be really intentional about a consultative approach to matching volunteers with charities. We even give volunteers something similar to a Meyers-Briggs test to understand them well. . If you can find the right match, it helps to create a committed and sustained volunteer base for the charity.

TG: How do your Success Grants work?

HK: We work with organizations that are brave enough to state their goals quantitatively, measure their outcomes and publish them. But we also want to

have at least half of our emphasis with these charities be about storytelling and faithfulness to calling so that we can grasp who's making strategic investments in the community that may not be best represented in metrics.

TG: Why is the power of story as important, if not more important, than metrics alone?

HK: Narrative has been such a powerful tool throughout human history. Metrics and statistics may appeal to some business folks, but even they want to understand what someone's calling is, what's on their heart. Storytelling is the most powerful way to convey what you do. We use video and radio to interview charities and have them talk to us about people that they've helped. This helps because nobody wants to invest in statistics; they want to invest in a real person.

To learn more about DurhamCares visit their website at Durhamcares.org.

Henry Kaestner felt God's calling to use his technical and entrepreneurial skills – and DurhamCares was born.

