

Beneficent Brewing

Beer companies include charitable giving in their overall business models

Craft breweries, which always start small, rely on strong community support for success, and as they grow, many give back to those communities. This reciprocation often takes the form of special-edition beers like Ale Wagger brown ale from Houston, Texas' Saint Arnold Brewing Co., which donates the brew's sales to local animal rescues. Other times, brewers decide to build a philanthropic mission into the very fabric of their businesses.

Jacque Berglund founded the Minneapolis-based beer company Finnegans with Kieran Folliard in 2000. Profits from its Irish amber ale, blonde ale and seasonal Dead Irish Poet stout (all \$8 to \$9 a six-pack of bottles or cans)—which are made at St. Paul, Minnesota's Summit Brewing Co.—go to the Finnegans Community Fund, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that purchases fresh produce from farmers in Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota, South Dakota and Iowa for distribution to area food shelves. The business arrangement means 98 percent of the fund's spending is on its programs, rather than administration. "It's a super-efficient and effective machine," Berglund explains. The concept has sparked a lot of curiosity about the brand's social entrepreneurship. "On the consumer side, we market the message that we're a sustainable social business," she notes. "Other than just beer drinkers who like our product, that's gaining a lot of interest." Finnegans sold more than 266,000 (2.25-gallon) cases in 2014 and is Minnesota's sixth-largest beer brand, Berglund says.

Rob Nowaczyk began making the Fireman's Brew after he and cofounder Ed Walker—both Los Angeles-based firefighters—realized that they could link their enjoyment of beer with the needs of their profession. "From the beginning, it was all about raising money," Nowaczyk explains. Fireman's Brew donates 5 percent of net profits to the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation. The brand's Brunette doppelbock, Blonde Pilsner and Redhead amber ale are sold on draft (about \$4 to \$5) and in six-packs of bottles (\$9) across 15 states, with active expansion planned for this year. Nowaczyk says the brand has received strong support from firefighters nationwide, including more than 160 who have invested in the company. "It's really caught on across the country," he says. "Firefighters are a brotherhood."

Belgrade, Montana-based Dog Tag Brewing got started in 2013, when former U.S. Marine Corps officer Seth Jordan was looking for a way to honor the memory of fallen service members. Every can of Dog Tag Lager and IPA (both \$8 to \$9 a six-pack of cans) features an individual's story, with a percentage of profits donated to a charity chosen by the person's family. Since its launch, the brand has received

strong support. "The response nationwide has been pretty overwhelming," marketing director Katy Jordan says. "People are taken by the mission and the messaging." Dog Tag encourages consumers to use the social media hashtag #ToastAHero when enjoying the beer. "It's not meant to be overly somber," Jordan explains. "We want people to celebrate these service members' lives, honor their sacrifice and toast to them." Dog Tag's website includes a section where consumers can learn more about each service member's life.

Inspired by his city's high number of breweries and nonprofits, Ryan Saari opened the Oregon Public House in Portland, Oregon, in May 2013. The venue—which includes a pub,



At Oregon Public House in Portland, Oregon, patrons can feel good about ordering another round of beer, since profits support local charities. An all-volunteer board of directors runs the business.

an event space and a family-focused co-op—donates all its profits to local charities, such as youth job training organization The Portland Kitchen. "Our mission is creating a place of community, change and giving back," Saari explains. "People rally around that, both as volunteers and as patrons. We have partnerships with our customers as well as with nonprofits." Oregon Public House sells its Do Gooder IPA—crafted at nearby Pints Brewery—alongside local favorites and imported brews and plans to raise money to open its own brewery this year. Saari says that the biggest challenge has been turning a monthly profit, which he notes is critical to the company's business model. Happily, Oregon Public House has been profitable every month since opening, donating over \$40,000 so far. "We see it as the tip of the iceberg," Saari notes. "Our goal is to donate \$10,000 a month, which is audacious for a small pub. But we have some things in the works to get us there." **mw**

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