



▲ Employees from Cook Singapore prepare food as part of their volunteer work at Krsna's Free Meals.. From left: Kendy Loke (Supply Chain specialist), Ismadi Achang (Supply Chain team lead), Sharon Seah (Customer Service representative), and Chan Kai Weng (Supply Chain Distribution expediter).

Giving back

A look at Cook's CSR efforts across the globe

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A holistic approach

Erin Kunkel talks the evolution of Cook's CSR program

Having grown over the last five years to become a holistic program, which covers more aspects of the way we do business, the corporate social responsibility (CSR) Program fosters one of the many values that underpin Cook Medical: give back. We believe in making our communities stronger by sharing our time, skills, and resources, and over the years, we have transformed into an environmentally conscious company and have contributed years of continued efforts in supporting local communities and the less fortunate.

To learn more about the Cook CSR program, **Kar See Lock** (KarSee.Lock@CookMedical.com), a former written content specialist for Cook APAC, interviewed **Erin Kunkel**, CSR manager, about the background, underlying philosophy, achievements, and future plans of the program.

How did the Cook CSR program first start out?

What started as the development of an environmental sustainability program five years ago evolved into a collaborative approach to managing the environmental, social, and governance aspects of how we do business. We recognized early on that environmental considerations

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like energy use, recycling improvements, and carbon emissions were not the only critical aspects of being a truly sustainable business. We also needed to consider how to promote sustainability in the relationships we have with our employees and communities, and to collaborate with Ethics & Compliance, Customer Support & Delivery, and other functions throughout Cook to ensure sustainable governance and procurement practices. Each of these aspects is equally critical to our long-term success as an organization.

What is the underlying philosophy behind of program?

CSR at Cook is about fulfilling our mission and being true to our values. If we want to be able to serve patients in perpetuity, we need to be a holistically sustainable business. This requires us to be intentional about the environmental and social impacts that we are having in the course of doing business. With this mindset, it is natural to use our influence to be a good neighbor and have a positive impact on our communities and stakeholders.

Could you share with us some of the major achievements of the CSR program in the past couple of years?

First, in Europe, we have achieved ISO 14001 certification for environmental management at William Cook Europe (WCE) and Cook Ireland. This standard is globally recognized for continuous improvement in managing environmental aspects of operations and has been effective in helping us reach sustainability goals at both sites.

We are also pursuing LEED and WELL certifications during new construction projects to reduce

environmental impact and improve employee well-being, especially for new offices located in the Asia-Pacific (APAC) region.

In the United States, we have sustained several lasting partnerships with social enterprises such as Stone Belt ARC (a contract manufacturer which employs adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities) and Goodwill Industries (a contract manufacturer which employs individuals facing myriad barriers to employment). Both partner organizations provide critical wrap around services to support living, learning, working, and full participation in the community. We are passionate about this model of business as a conduit for removing barriers to meaningful employment and providing equitable opportunities for all community members.

What are the future plans for the CSR program?

In the future, we aim to certify all manufacturing sites to ISO 14001 and to continue to seek improvement in the management of environmental impacts in terms of our energy and water usage, recycling and composting rates, and carbon footprint. We are also engaging with our site leadership and field-based employees around the world to identify opportunities to remove barriers to meaningful employment and to reduce inequities in our communities. The sites, as well as our 20 highest employee-populous cities around the world, are working to develop meaningful partnerships with community organizations to aid in achieving these goals.



▲ **Erin Kunkel**, CSR manager

These examples show only a handful of the great work our employees are doing around the globe. When it comes to adopting sustainable best practices and spreading love and care throughout the community, Cook facilities worldwide are equally proactive and motivated.

From major construction projects such as installing solar panels to the humble but nonetheless worthwhile exercises such as hiking-trail clean-ups, Cook's wide spectrum of CSR initiatives have contributed to a more sustainable future and responded to challenges faced by the local communities.

Take a look at some of the CSR initiatives undertaken by a number of Cook facilities worldwide on the following pages.



Hike and Clean

Cook Hong Kong supports Earth Week

Hiking trails have served as precious breathing spaces for many Hong Kongers, especially during the pandemic, when gyms and fitness centers were mostly closed. Subsequently, there was an increased amount of plastic bags, bottles, tin cans, and cigarette butts lying discarded in the great outdoors. Trash and waste can release toxins into their surroundings and spoil the rural landscape. The damage done on the environment could be irreversible.

In an effort to rally outdoor enthusiasts to clean up one of the popular hiking trails on the island, Cook Hong Kong hosted a Hike and Clean activity on April 23 as one of multiple initiatives in support of Earth Week. More than ten employees from the Hong Kong

office gathered for the clean-up and picked up bags of trash along the walk.

"It felt really great and meaningful to support Earth Day with my team members. It was a solid team effort," **James Froud**, Strategic Account Executives manager, said.

The trail begins at the Braemar Hill and ends at Quarry Bay, which is located near the Cook Hong Kong office. The hike took approximately three hours to complete. Not only did the group spend the afternoon hiking, but they also did their part to make Hong Kong a more sustainable city.

• **Kar See Lock** (KarSee.Lock@CookMedical.com) is a written content specialist for Cook APAC based at Cook Hong Kong.

▲ **Top:** A scenic view of the city during the Hike and Clean event hosted by Cook Hong Kong. **Bottom:** **James Froud** (Strategic Account Executives manager) having fun while picking up litter on the mountain trail.

"It felt really great and meaningful to support Earth Day with my team members. It was a solid team effort."

– **James Froud**, Strategic Account Executives manager

Making a world of difference

Cook Hong Kong teams up with ImpactHK to help the homeless community

An act of kindness can make a world of difference to those in need. ImpactHK started out with a simple initiative of doing one kind act per month for people experiencing homelessness, but ended up developing into a charity built upon the kindness of hundreds of volunteers.

Based in Hong Kong, ImpactHK provides support to people experiencing homelessness by handing out supplies, offering care and human connection, providing shelter where possible, and helping them get off the streets and settle into employment. **Jeff Rotmeyer**, ImpactHK's founder, came to the Cook Hong Kong office on April 27 and talked to employees about the difficulties faced by the homeless, and how we could join the fight and improve the well-being of homeless people.

"Understanding more about the homeless is just the first step in providing practical support," **Vicki Chan**, Global Exhibition manager, said. "ImpactHK is known for their kindness walks around the underprivileged neighborhoods in Hong Kong, and I am hoping to see further collaboration between Cook



▲ **Jeff Rotmeyer**, founder of ImpactHK, spoke to employees at Cook Hong Kong about how they could help in improving the well-being of the homeless community.

and ImpactHK in making a greater impact on the homeless."

"It is easy to label the homeless as poor and lazy, but each homeless person has their own life story and hardship," **Maize Lau**, regional Human Resources specialist, Hong Kong and Taiwan, said. "The best way to start supporting them is perhaps to reduce stigma and prejudice that are put on them, extend an open arm and mind, and listen to what they have to say. Only then will we begin to truly understand the plight of the less fortunate."

In an effort to curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus, many fast-food chain outlets in Hong Kong halted their dine-in service starting at 6:00 pm. This led to a rise in

homeless on the streets, as many branches had traditionally offered a safe and warm place for them to get some sleep during the night. Donations are just one of the ways to help put a roof over the heads of homeless people during these challenging times, and becoming a volunteer is another practical way of supporting the group.

To support the homeless community, Cook Hong Kong will be joining the kindness walk hosted by ImpactHK at the end of the year and will actively explore future volunteering opportunities with ImpactHK, with the goal of making a direct and positive impact on the group.

• **Kar See Lock** (KarSee.Lock@CookMedical.com) is a written content specialist for Cook APAC based at Cook Hong Kong.

Creating a healthy work space

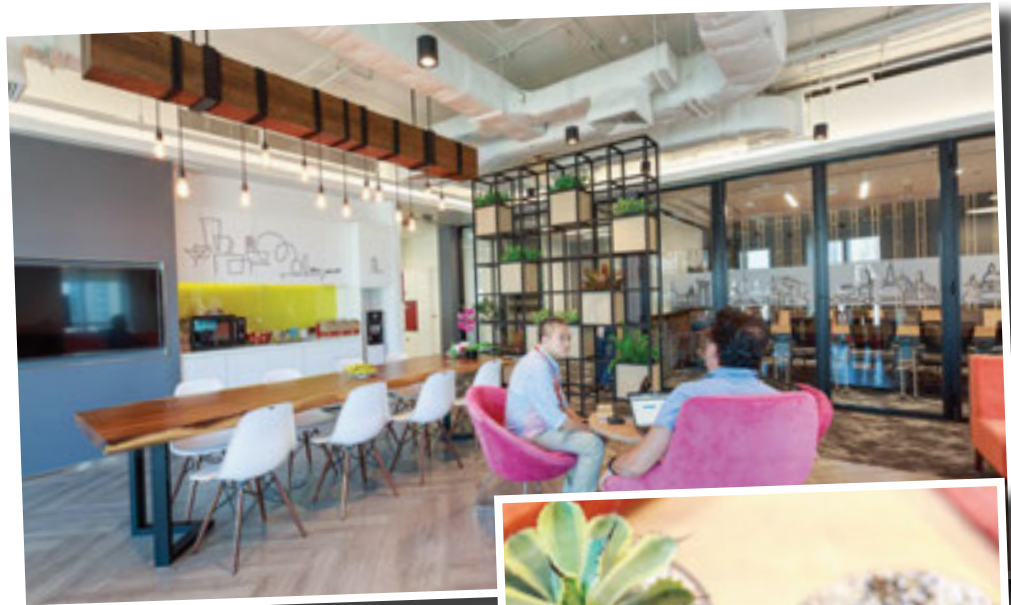
Cook Thailand awarded WELL Certification

Because some employees may potentially spend more than eight hours a day in the office, **Ornuma Karo**, office manager at Cook Medical Thailand, believes it is important to provide them with the proper working conditions.

"It is essential for companies to foster a healthier working environment, where employees can be comfortably productive," Ornuma said.

The Cook Medical Thailand office was recently awarded the WELL Certification at the Silver level by the International WELL Building Institute (IWBI). The distinction was awarded through IWBI's WELL Building Standard (WELL), which is the leading global rating system for buildings, interior spaces, and communities that seek to advance occupants' health and wellness through implementing human-centric building features.

Launched in 2014, the WELL Building Standard consists of more than 100 evaluation standards, covering seven categories of building performance: air, water, light, nourishment, fitness, comfort, and mind. More than 4,350 projects encompassing over 596 million square feet are applying WELL across 62 countries. Cook Medical Thailand earned the distinction after a series of rigorous tests and evaluations conducted by IWBI.



Thailand is the second APAC office to receive this prestigious recognition. Cook Hong Kong received the WELL certificate at the Silver level in 2019.

"I am delighted to see our continuous efforts in creating an ideal workplace attain such global standard," said **Jean-Marc Creissel**, Cook Medical's vice president, director of Asia-Pacific. "We will keep cultivating a healthy workforce across the Asia-Pacific region, which is beneficial to not only the company, but the community and society as a whole."

A look at the office

Located on the 19th floor of the Athenee Tower in the central business district of Bangkok, the Thailand office is a welcoming and thoughtful workplace structured to embrace wellness concepts by introducing dynamic office features and well-being initiatives.

The interior build-out supports Cook's core culture of collaboration, transparency, and flexibility by featuring numerous collaborative areas, outdoor views, natural light, a lactation room, etc. Features such as adjustable workstations, air-pol-

▲ These photos feature the pantry area of the Cook Medical Thailand office. Plant pots are placed in the pantry and throughout the office to create a pleasant and lively work environment. Disclaimer: These photos were taken before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

lutant-filtering ventilators, and filtered-water stations all prioritize employees' well-being starting from the conceptual and planning stages of the workplace design.

"I am very proud of my office as an employee, and I believe it will also come across as an attractive point for future recruits," Ornuma said.

• **Kar See Lock** (KarSee.Lock@CookMedical.com) is a written content specialist for Cook APAC based at Cook Hong Kong.

Dignity for Children

Cook Malaysia supports youth education with in-kind donations

With an aim to help children flourish in a digitally driven and uncertain world, employees at Cook Malaysia jumped into action and gathered computers and clothing for underprivileged children at Dignity for Children (Dignity).

Why Dignity for Children?

Dignity is a children-focused, one-stop community learning center for underprivileged children and youth aged 1 to 18 years. Based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, the organization is rooted in the belief that quality education is the key to breaking the cycle of poverty. By offering a wide variety of educational and vocational trainings, they make sure the bright minds of tomorrow are equipped for success.

Dignity came to mind when the three focus areas (youth education, social enterprising, and community health) were presented by the Global Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) task force.

"We plan to focus on children, and we are looking for a social enterprise to team up with," **Samuel Teh**, general manager for Cook Malaysia and Singapore, said. "Dignity for Children appears to be a good match. They have a strong track record in supporting children in need to overcome barriers when accessing education."



▲ **Samuel Teh**, general manager for Cook Malaysia and Singapore (left) passes on donation items to **Liew Tong Ngan**, head of Marketing & Communications for Dignity (right).

Dignity adopts a learner-centered approach for children with diversified learning styles. For youths who find that academia is not their strongest suit, Dignity provides them with vocational trainings. They are trusted to run a café, bakery, hair salon, or art workshops, or to sell hand-sewn goods, or transform urban rooftops into green spaces.

Cook Malaysia's in-kind donation

After paying a visit to Dignity's learning center and meeting their director, Cook Malaysia confirmed Dignity as their partner of choice. To start with, Cook Malaysia's support for Dignity came in the form of donations.

Cook Malaysia invited employees to drop off used clothes and supplies

at the office. A total of seven boxes of used clothes were collected in the course of two weeks.

“Serving and giving back to the community is something which I hold dear, and I would like to encourage everyone to do the same,” **Carmen Yeoh**, Asia-Pacific product training manager for Endoscopy, said.

Because many children were missing out on education during the pandemic due to a lack of access to technology, Cook Malaysia wiped and refurbished four old computers and donated them to children engaged in online learning.

“I feel if we have the means and time, we should give back to the community,” Samuel said. “We do not need an official event. We can do it anytime, as each small step counts.”

Future cooperation with Dignity

Dignity is currently building a farm school in Bentong, in the state of Pahang. The school advocates a natural, traditional, and ecologically sustainable way of farming and will better serve the disadvantaged rural community by offering education and vocational training opportunities.

Cook Malaysia is looking into ways to continue the support for Dignity, which may come in the form of employee volunteering, sharing of healthcare knowledge, in-kind donations, and more. This project will tie in well with Cook’s DE&I focus on youth education and social enterprising, and should make a positive impact on underprivileged children struggling to access education.

• **Kar See Lock** (*KarSee.Lock@CookMedical.com*) is a written content specialist for Cook APAC based at Cook Hong Kong.

Acronyms in this section

- ▶ **CSR** – Corporate Social Responsibility
- ▶ **ISO** – International Organization for Standardization
- ▶ **APAC** – Asia Pacific
- ▶ **LEED** – Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design
- ▶ **DE&I** – Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- ▶ **IWBI** – International WELL Building Institute
- ▶ **CNC** – Computer numerical controlled
- ▶ **CAD** – Computer-aided design
- ▶ **CAM** – Computer-aided manufacturing
- ▶ **LHS** – Leechburg High School
- ▶ **WCE** – William Cook Europe

Lending a hand

Cook Singapore finds ways to contribute amidst the pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about many challenges to the world. In Singapore, our regular efforts in giving back to the community were impacted in big ways. With the safety measures and local restrictions imposed by the government, volunteering opportunities and outreach became scarce. However, in recent months, the authorities have relaxed the measures as the COVID-19 situation stabilizes. This has resulted in charitable and social engagement associations opening up to allow a limited number of volunteers to help in their community programs.

The Cook Singapore team has always been very supportive of these efforts. We always have more hands put up to participate than the maximum permissible limit imposed due to the safety restrictions. We were elated to be able to make some contributions to two associations: 3M Moves and Krsna's Free Meals.

3M Moves

This joint effort between 3M and the People's Association, South East Community Development Council, provides one safety or household product (donated by 3M) to less-privileged elderly people and families living in the



▲ Top from, left: **Ooi Saw Peang** (Supply Chain operator), **Emerald Seah** (Quality Assurance Specialist), and **Ismail Salleh** (Supply Chain team lead) carrying bags of donated supplies for a door-to-door delivery. Bottom: During their day volunteering with People's Association, South East Community Development Council, employees from Cook Singapore sorted and packed household items donated by 3M and then delivered them to less-privileged families/households.



▲ Employees from Cook Singapore during the day they spent volunteering with Krsna's Free Meals. This program provides packed meals to nursing homes, elderly daycare centers, and residents' committees. Pictured, from left: **Pauline Lim** (Regional Human Resources specialist), **Sharon Seah** (Customer Service representative), **Kendy Loke** (Supply Chain specialist), **Chan Kai Weng** (Supply Chain Distribution expediter) and **Ismadi Achang** (Supply Chain team lead).

southeast district of Singapore. Upon receiving the products, the People's Association requires large groups of volunteers to sort and pack the supplies into hampers and then distribute them. This is where Cook Singapore stepped in. A group of employees gathered early on a Saturday morning to sort and pack hampers before delivering the products door to door to needy households.

Krsna's Free Meals

Most of the beneficiaries of Krsna's Free Meals are migrant workers

and the elderly living in Singapore. The group, which is fully run by volunteers, provides packed breakfast and lunches to nursing homes, elderly daycare centers, and residence committees daily.

The Cook Singapore team recently volunteered with the organization. They began their day with a briefing on some guidelines, and then they were tasked with peeling and cutting mountains of vegetables, such as winter beans, potatoes, and brinjals (or eggplants). After the preparation was completed, the team packed and distributed the ready-cooked

food to the beneficiaries. When that was finished, they cleaned up the location in preparation for the next group of volunteers. Though they were not well-equipped and they worked in a rather compromised environment, the volunteers overcame the hardship with determination and joviality.

• **Summer Tan** (Summer.Tan@CookMedical.com) is a Marketing & Communications specialist for Customer Support and Delivery (CSD) in APAC.



▲ The perennial wildflower meadow planted on site at Cook Limerick as part of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2015-2020.

Leaving it better than we found it

Cook Limerick proves commitment to highest environmental standards



▲ To celebrate Earth Day 2021, Cook Limerick created in

Under the environmental sustainability pillar of Cook Limerick's CSR strategy, we are committed to leaving our environment better than we found it and protecting and developing the resources around us. As a manufacturing plant, we've always tried to ensure we make every effort to not only look after the environment around our site, but to nurture it.

To that end, we have received certification for ISO 50001 Energy Management and ISO 14001 Environmental Management Systems. By achieving dual certification, we will have proven our commitment to having the highest environmental standards.

We've also worked hard to protect and develop the natural habitat around our site. Through a volunteer committee, the Green Team, a plan was formulated to help protect and enhance the ecology and biodiversity on site. In 2019, we grew a perennial wildflower meadow, as



▲ One of the owl boxes created by Cook Limerick.



insect hotels.

part of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2015-2020, which has attracted new and existing insects to the area. We also developed a pathway and additional greenway.

As the site backs onto the River Shannon, we cleared and preserved a pre-existing walking track, which is used daily by locals and our own employees.

In 2020, we noticed evidence of owl activity at the original Cook Medical house on our grounds at O'Halloran Road, so we've installed a special owl box to give them safe refuge. To date, we've noticed a lot of activity around the boxes, with one particular hover of local kestrels making it their home. We're in the process of adding squirrel boxes, following sightings of red squirrels along the perimeter of our site.

To celebrate Earth Day 2021, we built our very own insect hotels. Homes for little creatures are becoming few and far with the

increase of human activity. Insects and bugs are vital for our existence, so we wanted to offer them a safe and secure dwelling where they can grow, pollinate, and coexist. Our insect hotels provide a safe place for insects like butterflies, moths, ladybugs, and solitary bees. With the help of our employees, our eco-friendly insect hotels were built using upcycled garden materials and wooden shipping pallets, natural items such as leaves and sticks, and re-purposed items.

We've recently begun working in partnership with local beekeepers to house beehives at the back of the original Cook house. We're excited about this new addition and are hopeful of a pot or two of honey.

• **Laura Holland** (Laura.Holland@CookMedical.com) is an External Communications specialist for EMEA.

Having a greater impact

Cook Limerick partners with Novas to help those experiencing homelessness

Since we arrived in Limerick, Cook has always offered support to the community through charitable donations and sponsorships. In 2019, we wanted to focus our activities in order to have a greater impact, while also ensuring we had input from our employees. As a result, we conducted an employee vote to select a charity partner.

Thus began a partnership between Cook Limerick and Novas, a local charity that helps those who are experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness.

As well as choosing our first ever charity partner, we also recruited a volunteer-led committee, Cairde Cook (Cairde is the Irish-language word for friendship), made up of employees from across the business, to lead community activities. Since its inception, Cairde Cook has spearheaded many great initiatives with Novas and has established a great relationship with them.

As part of the partnership, we have committed to installing a dedicated art space in one of Novas's residential properties, for which we are actively raising funds. We also work closely with Novas to offer support in areas they need it most.

By the end of 2019, we had completed two hugely successful



▲ Pictured are employees from Cook Limerick during Novas Sleep-Out: **Cristina Zarco, John Savage, Barbara Collins, Brenda Ward, and Roger Moroney.**

group volunteer days with Novas, sponsored the Novas Sleep-Out, and raised funds throughout the year with activities such as a bake sale and summer raffle.

Due to the arrival of COVID-19 in Ireland in March 2020, we had to cancel planned activities. Thankfully, we were able to find ways to continue to support Novas. We donated personal protective equipment (PPE) and sponsored the Sleep-Out (this year a Sleep-In due to the pandemic) for a second year. We offered support and guidance in areas of Human Resources (HR) and Environmental, Health, and Safety (EHS) to help them adjust to new ways of working and adhere to governmental health and safety guidelines.

Working with other organizations, such as Novas, gives us a chance to help members of our society and community in Limerick and truly make an impact.

"The charity partnership between Novas and Cook Medical has been such a positive experience for us as an organization," **Una Burns**, head of Policy & Communications at Novas, said. "It is evident that this partnership is supported from the top down, and this is something we truly value. It's a relationship based on equality, philanthropy, and a shared vision to enhance the communities in which we live."

• **Laura Holland** (Laura.Holland@CookMedical.com) is an External Communications specialist for EMEA.

Check out the story on the next page to learn about one employee's experience volunteering with Novas.

"I have been very lucky"

Cristina Zarco hopes to make a difference through work with Novas

Cristina Zarco is not a fan of the term *charity*. She believes that, while charitable acts do come out of love for others, giving back to local communities is something that needs to happen to improve people's lives and their everyday conditions.

"The word charity gives the impression that we are helping people because we are good people, whereas the reality is that there is an unfair distribution of resources: locally, nationally, and world-wide," Cristina said. "In this scenario, there is a lack of responsibility and commitment from the authorities and the decision makers to provide funds and means to reduce homelessness and poverty."

Cristina has been active in supporting her local communities in Limerick, Ireland, for several years. She is originally from Alcalá de Henares, which is northeast of Madrid, Spain. She first moved to Ireland in 2003 as an international student and came back in 2007, after she received her degree. Before the pandemic, she volunteered with the Bedford Row Family Project, a hospitality center that supported families affected by imprisonment. She also helped out the St. Patrick's Friary in Moyross, which is a suburb of Limerick.

Since January 2019, she has been volunteering with Novas. This Irish organization opened its first services in 2002, and their facilities are largely based in Munster, a county in southern Ireland, with a few services in the Dublin area. They support families and single adults who are socially excluded or disadvantaged but primarily look after those who are experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness. Because they believe that everyone should have a home, they provide long-term housing units and complexes throughout the country. In addition, their wide, holistic range of services includes support options for drug abusers, including a detox facility and a respite house for the families of people who are dealing with addiction.

A few Christmases ago, Cook had a campaign to collect blankets and sleeping bags for Novas. At that time, Cristina did not have anything to donate, but kept thinking that she would like to volunteer. One evening she was walking in town and came across their office in Limerick, so she asked how she could help. Things developed from that very moment. Her first summer volunteering with the organization, she worked four evenings a week and loved it. She was very happy to cover for those who were on holidays. Novas's activities became a bit more complicated when the COVID-19 pandemic hit Ireland, and in the summer of 2020 they canceled services. Cristina currently tries to volunteer once a week and hopes that this summer things will be a bit better than last year.

When volunteering with Novas, one of the things that Cristina does is provide hot food and beverages. Novas also distributes clothes and toiletries to those whom it serves.

"I have been very lucky in my life," Cristina said. "I have a very supportive family, and I have been able to study and travel and get a good job. I believe I have to help other people in order to make this world a bit fairer and a bit better."



▲ **Cristina Zarco** is a senior Customer Support representative at Cook Limerick.

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Their strength, their humanity

For Cristina, the experience of volunteering with Novas goes beyond its practical actions.

"I always say that the people we help are doing charity with me, towards me," she said. "I learn from them every day. Their strength and resilience are an inspiration in my life. I feel useful and grateful knowing that they have someone to talk to."

Throughout this experience, she has learned (and is still learning) how to deal with tough situations and how to communicate with people under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs. For instance, she learned not to take certain words or attitudes into consideration.

"I am growing a thicker skin," she said. "I try my best to help people who are in distress, and I think I have become better at looking for solutions from a calmer state of mind."

Being a volunteer is not about personal gain or medals won with pride. It is about the stories that are encountered throughout the experience. No matter how small, an act of kindness goes a long way and is never wasted.

Cristina recalled that while she was working at the Bedford Row Family Project, people would come to the prison center for coffee, tea, and biscuits. However, they would also come for crayons and coloring books.

"On one Valentine's Day, I gave them paper hearts, on which they then wrote a note for their families and loved ones," Cristina said.

Another time, she wrote encouraging notes and posted them on the coffee cups. One of the women at the center was very happy about this idea and planned to show her son later during visiting hours.

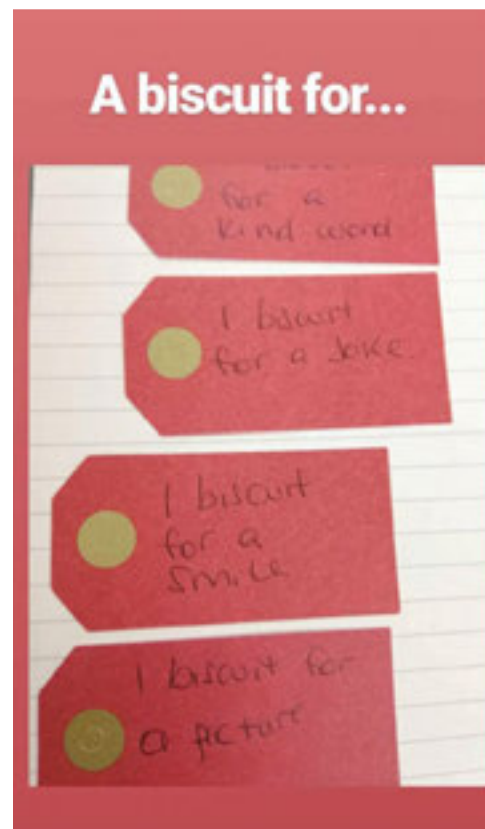
"She told me that she got in trouble with the officer as she should have shown it to him before the control checks," Cristina said. "She simply kept her note on her as if, like it were a grocery receipt. I felt mortified, because I think I created an issue for her, but she reassured me while she left laughing, that she felt human, she felt loved and encouraged."

Hopefully and fiercely looking ahead

Before saying "hasta luego" (see you later) to Cristina, we asked her about her hopes for the future of volunteering. She said that she would like to see more programs aimed at raising awareness about homelessness and poverty. She hopes that younger people will learn to live with less, dedicate some of their time to volunteering, and ask their local and national governments to own responsibility and take action on these social issues. Cristina also noted that, while volunteering is a beautiful and noble way to donate personal time, it is important to remember that these services should be run and managed by professionals with the necessary skills.

"Before the pandemic, I played with the idea of establishing a training center for people living at the shelters or the residencies to avoid being on the streets the whole day," she said. "I would love to see a place where people can spend their day, gaining social skills and learning something that nurtures their self-esteem. Unfortunately, because of the health emergency, many projects like this had to be put aside. However, we stay positive, and I know I will keep volunteering and raising awareness among the people."

• **Vanessa Marengo** (*Vanessa.Marengo@CookMedical.com*) is a Reimbursement manager based in Italy.



▲ **Top:** Cristina during the Novas Sleep-Out.
Bottom: Some of the notes Cristina wrote during her time with the Bedford Row Family Project.



▲ Members of Cook Vandergrift's Community Engagement Team are pictured, from left: **Heidi Rupprecht** (production engineer), **Danielle Poprik** (quality engineer, team lead and local CSR representative), **Darrin Filer** (IT manager), **Danielle Oyedayo** (Documentation Control specialist), **Joe Felschow** (machinist), **Chris Evans** (general manager and director of Manufacturing Operations), **Kristy McCorkle** (Human Resource manager), **Cindy Connor** (Controlled Stores associate), and **Christine Arb** (clerk). Not pictured: **Stephanie Figueroa-Cintron** (cafeteria staff) and **Jim Ferguson** (senior project manager for Quality Assurance).

Serving the community

Cook Vandergrift lives Cook's values through Community Engagement team

Giving back to the places where we live is one of the seven values that Cook encourages employees to have. It is evident that employees at Cook Vandergrift, located 30 miles northeast of Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania, not only embrace this ideal, but exhibit it every day. A group of Vandergrift employees recently developed a team that is dedicated to creating partnerships and participating in events in their community.

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The idea to start the Community Engagement team was initially proposed in December of 2020. They discussed what the team would do, created some goals, and named a leader.

In early 2021, the team was officially created with three main goals to focus on—youth education, social enterprise, and community health.

To start, the team created partnerships with both a local skating rink, VALarena, and nearby Leechburg High School (LHS). VALarena is a staple in the community and many of Cook Vandergrift’s employees have skated there. When the skating rink faced closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic, **Tina Girdano** pitched the idea to her team, and they reached out to create a partnership with the rink.

The idea to work with LHS came from **Joe Felschow**, who had graduated from there. He reached out to the school about working with the students on several different projects and events.

Outside of these two partnerships, the Community Engagement team has also worked with local charities. They sponsored a golf outing for an organization that provides shelter for victims of abuse. At this golf outing, one of the Cook participants was on the winning team. However, when given the cash prize, he insisted on giving it back to the cause.

Additionally, the team donated \$700 to a local boy who was raising money in honor of his grandfather whom he lost to Alzheimer’s. They organized a 50/50 raffle and collected donations from other Cook employees.

One of the most unique aspects of this team is that it is employee led. **Chris Evans** said that it’s not the leaders of the team providing a list of places they should support. It’s

“They want to see the company they work for established in the community and being helpful in the community.”

– **Chris Evans**, general manager and director of Manufacturing Operations at Cook Vandergrift

employees coming forward with ideas and volunteering to help.

“They want to see the company they work for established in the community and being helpful in the community,” Chris said.

This motivation is what drives many of the members of the team to continue to be involved. Before the Community Engagement team was created, Cook Vandergrift was not a well-known company in the area. It is tucked away behind a row of houses with a small red sign that makes it easy to miss, employees said. With this engagement, they are not only giving back to their community, but they are earning their spot on the map.

• **Morgan Bruns** (*Morgan.Bruns@CookMedical.com*) was the Editorial Content intern at Park 48 in the summer of 2021.

Have a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) story to share from your facility?

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Forever grateful

Joe Felschow talks community engagement with his alma mater Leechburg High School

Cook Vandergrift's Community Engagement team is focused on providing educational opportunities and supporting social ventures and by partnering with a local high school just six minutes away, they were able to promote all three of those areas. While I was speaking to members of the Community Engagement team about their partnership with Leechburg High School (LHS), they all pointed me to their key asset, **Joe Felschow**.

Joe started at Cook in 2006 at the young age of 18. He was fresh out of high school and unsure of what his next step would be. After a friend suggested working at Cook Vandergrift, a place Joe had never heard of before, he applied and was hired as a production operator in Pipette Manufacturing. After a little over a year, they asked for a volunteer to lend a hand in the Machine Shop. He fell in love with the work and asked for a permanent position in the shop.

Now, he is a computer numerical controlled (CNC) machinist, which means he programs mills, lathes longhand, and works with computer-aided design (CAD) and computer-aided manufacturing (CAM). He



▲ **Joe Felschow** (right) speaks to students at Leechburg High School, which is his alma mater with Engineer **Stephen Kustra** (left).

“This here, so far, is one of my favorite chapters of my career at Cook. I will forever be grateful.”

– Joe Felschow, a machinist at Cook Vandergrift

has also earned many certificates through Cook's tuition-assistance program.

While this willingness to volunteer led Joe to find his place in the Machine Shop, it also led him to find his passion for volunteering in general.

Outside of Cook, he is a community leader, charity organizer, and president of the Leechburg

Cemetery Company. He also uses his love for barbecuing at fundraising events, which he organizes throughout the year, including helping a local daycare that was affected by a landslide or helping his sick brother **Carl**. It was inevitable that Joe would be a key asset to the company's new Community Engagement team.

When thinking about how to get Cook Vandergrift involved in the area, Joe knew that LHS would be the perfect opportunity. He first reached out when Cook planned an Earth Day initiative. Students from the high school wood shop built birdhouses that the art students later painted. They were so excited

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CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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to participate in this project that they had the birdhouses finished in just a couple of weeks. Now, the birdhouses line the driveway going into Cook Vandergrift. Within days, there were already birds nesting in them.

This project led to others with LHS. **Chris Evans, Kristy McCorkle, Danielle Poprik** (CSR rep), and Joe had a formal meet-and-greet with LHS Superintendent **Tiffany Nix**. At this meeting, they discussed their community engagement goals and potential future opportunities to work together.

In early June of this year, Joe and some fellow engineers met with LHS students to talk about Cook, career opportunities, and life after high school. They wanted to educate the students on the many different career paths that Cook has to offer with or without a college degree.

For the benefit of the students who didn't have a plan for after high school, Joe shared his story and how he grew within the company through the tuition-assistance program.

"I talked to them about opportunities besides college. I wanted to let them know it's not the only way," he said.

Speaking with the students at LHS has had a great impact on Joe. He hopes to achieve a long-lasting relationship like this one with more schools in the community and speak to them annually about the many possibilities available for those who work at Cook.

"This here, so far, is one of my favorite chapters of my career at Cook," Joe said. "I will forever be grateful."

• **Morgan Bruns** (Morgan.Bruns@CookMedical.com) was the Editorial Content intern at Park 48 in the summer of 2021.



▲ Birdhouses created by the student at Leechburg High School (LHS) are lined up on a conference room table at Cook Vandergrift before they were installed along the driveway leading into the facility.

► An up-close look at one of the boxes already being inhabited.



Reviving a community staple

Cook Vandergrift partners with local skating rink

There's something charming about small town living. Whether it be the local restaurants where regulars have their morning coffee or seeing someone you know when you're running errands, there's an undeniable sense of community. What really makes a small-town special, though, is what brings that community together.

With a population of just over 1,000 people, North Apollo, Pennsylvania, is home of the VALarena skating rink, which has been a staple in the community since the late 1940s. With its disco ball, its inviting smell of pizza, and its loud music, it is the go-to for birthday parties, date nights, or even just something to do on a Friday evening. Although some people travel 30 to 40 minutes to this nostalgic rink, its most frequent skaters come from Vandergrift, Apollo, and Leechburg. This is how the rink got its name. The first three letters are an acronym for the surrounding towns. Generations of community members have been skating there for years.

Two of these community members are **Tina Girdano** (senior specialist, Human Resources) and **Kristy McCorkle** (manager, Human Resources), who work at Cook Vandergrift. Tina started skating at VALarena as a child, and now she watches her son play dek hockey there. When she found out that the



▲ Through their partnership with VALarena skating rink, Cook Vandergrift has been able to use the facility for training events.

rink was closing its doors due to the COVID-19 pandemic and suffering from wear and tear, she knew she had to help.

Tina then came up with the idea of creating a partnership with VALarena as part of Cook Vandergrift's recent community engagement efforts. She and Kristy, who is also a frequent VALarena customer, pitched the idea to **Chris Evans** (general manager, director of Manufacturing Operations), who, like Tina and Kristy, is a member of the Community Engagement team. The three of them took a trip to VALarena, where Chris saw the facility for the first time.

"We walked in and saw this great space, bigger than any single conference area that we have here on site—bigger than our cafeteria," Chris said. "We put our heads

together and said, 'This would be a great place for company meetings or training activities.'"

Since creating this partnership with VALarena's owners, **Fred and Debra Kneppshield**, Cook Vandergrift has used the rink for a range of activities. Because it is so spacious, it is the perfect facility for holding events while still complying with the Center for Disease Control's (CDC) social distancing guidelines. This meant that more people can attend at one time than was possible at Cook Vandergrift's facility. They also use the rink as conference rooms.

"We are always looking for something to hold a larger amount of people," Tina said.

They've hosted other events there as well, including a free skate night for Cook employees and their families.

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This was particularly special because many of the employees had skated there when they were young, and now they got to bring their children.

They also held a very successful hiring event at the rink, where they gave out more offers for assembler positions than they had openings for at the time.

This partnership has given Fred and Debra the funding needed to make some much needed repairs and upgrades to the aging building, including a new roof, flooring, and ice maker.

Relationships like this one not only connect Cook Vandergrift with the community, but also “put them on the map,” as Chris would say. Cook Vandergrift’s facility is easy to miss when you’re driving by. Both Tina and Chris mentioned that they had never heard of it before working there because of its hidden location. Community engagement is so important because the surrounding areas are where a lot of their employees come from.

“It’s hard to get people to come out of Pittsburgh, which is our closest city,” Tina said. “It’s hard to get them to drive 45 minutes north to Vandergrift.”

Because of this partnership, Cook Vandergrift is more well known to the residents of Vandergrift, Apollo, and Leechburg. Whether it be their sign on the wall in VALarena or the many posts Fred publishes to Facebook, these small remarks get acknowledged by the community—individuals are getting a better understanding of where Cook Vandergrift is and what they do.

• **Morgan Bruns** (*Morgan.Bruns@CookMedical.com*) was the Editorial Content intern at Park 48 in the summer of 2021.



- ▲ Employees at Cook Vandergrift take part in a training event at the VALarena skating rink.
- ◀ The Cook Vandergrift sign outside of the newly revived skating rink.

“What is your story?”

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