

Health Care & Banking

Entrepreneur immersed in business of giving



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Developer Brett Torino is an entrepreneurial philanthropist.

On the day I visited him at his 40-acre ranch tucked away in the Toiyabe National Forest, it was teeming with children visiting for a week. For 25 years Torino has opened up his ranch to nonprofit organizations.

In the background was the ubiquitous sound of summer — children squealing at the day's delights. Later, the sound of the ultimate show-and-tell — a Flight for Life helicopter for children to tour — broke the hum of activity as it returned to its home base.

Maybe the watering hole, hundreds of fruit-laden trees, cabins a la "The Parent Trap" and forged friendships would all serve to help them forget — at least for a week — that they are battling cancer.

Torino, a nonconforming businessman who drives a Volkswagen Turbo Beetle, wears a ponytail down his back and goes for bike rides in Red Rock while the rest of the valley is still asleep, allows nonprofit groups to set up camp on his impressively landscaped land.

Recently, he took it a step further, working together with the Nevada Childhood Cancer Foundation, the Clark County School District and Sunrise Children's Hospital to create an environment where children fighting cancer can take a break from their disease and continue their studies.

Every year, the cancer foundation receives 250 new cases and, as part of its mission, works to find resources and money to support families affected by cancer.

Sunrise Children's Hospital is the first in the state and among a few in the nation to provide extra schooling for chronically ill children beyond what is federally mandated.

Before the Torino Classroom was founded, the federal government provided funding for five hours of study a week — that's homework, studying and testing. With the classroom, children will be able to keep up with their classmates, ideally avoiding failing grades and being kept back a grade.

The classroom's curriculum will be 33 hours long each week. Advanced placement courses are offered.

Torino's turning point as an entrepreneur came when he created the Christmas-themed Magical Forest when he was vice chairman of Opportunity Village, a nonprofit organization that provides work for people with mental disabilities.

"This is my destiny," he said. "It's not just about giving. It's about getting involved in giving. That's much harder to do. I realized that's what I want to do. It's part of what I do, and we're going to do it."

The original train used for rides at the Magical Forest has now been incorporated at his ranch.

For the first couple of years, Torino would build and tear down the forest before it was made a permanent fixture.

"I love it," he said of his experience of giving. "(The Magical Forest) got me hooked. It's in your bones. I always knew I was going to be an entrepreneur. You grow up, you always know you're going to give. It's part of what you do."

The foundation, he said, is a different way of doing business.

"It's a lot of work, it's a lot of headaches, it's a lot of frustration," he said. "But it doesn't take a whole lot to all of sudden hit you upside the head to realize what (good) you've done."

Torino had construction, property manage-

ment and brokerage companies in about five states.

"(I) sold everything," Torino said. "Apartment portfolios — sold 'em. Commercial portfolios, sold 'em. And it was with the objective of get rid of those things in (my) life that take 90 percent of (my) energy to get 10 percent of (my) opportunities done. My opportunity as a businessperson is as an entrepreneur."

Torino is attracted to philanthropy, not only as an alternative business model, but also by the folks who work behind the scenes, their actions often unrecognized, he said.

"It's awesome," he said. "That's what I'm

inspired by."

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Rocky Mountain Hospital and Medical Service, which does business as Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Insurance, will pay Nevada an administrative assessment of \$500,000 for failure to meet deadlines in correcting problems with its claim processing procedures.

The fine is part of an agreement between Nevada's insurance commissioner and Anthem involving record keeping, claims processing and notice deficiencies. The problems occurred during a claims system conversion from February 2006 to December 2006, Commissioner

Alice Molasky-Arman said.

Although Anthem had made significant progress toward meeting goals set by both sides, it hasn't met the timeline, she said.

As part of the agreement, Anthem paid \$1 million to the state earlier this year and agreed to pay additional administrative assessments if deadlines were not met, Molasky-Arman said.

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