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# Corporate philanthropy projects enjoy boom amid economy's tepid recovery

Beth Fitzgerald

**Susie Schub**'s Morristown company, **Caring Capital**, creates corporate philanthropic projects, and she is seeing an upsurge in activity that she thinks might be a harbinger of better days ahead for the economy.

Schub organizes volunteer projects for companies seeking team-building experiences, while at the same time doing good for the community. Schub has dispatched artists and artisans to corporations to help employees build furniture for people in need. Other employee teams make fleece hats and scarves, toys, board games, and decorative journals for patients recovering from illness.

After a relatively slow 2010, "this past January, things really started popping," Schub said she is twice as busy as last year: "Companies that had been cautious decided 'the coast is clear and we can return to what matters to us.'"

She said a group volunteer project helps companies improve employee engagement.

"On an obvious level, we give companies a very easy, user-friendly way to give back to the community, and almost every company wants to give back," she said. The other goal, "which is a little more ephemeral, is we give them a way in which they can re-engage their employees as people sitting down together to make something."

"So much of what we do (as employees) is words and numbers and information. We give people a chance to use a hammer, to apply paint and yarn and beads, and they start to open up and share stories. The bottom line: they make new friends and they are happy about going to work where they have new friends."

This year she expects to work with about 5,000 employees in about 15 companies; her clients include **Novartis** and **Solix**.

"Volunteerism is an important aspect of our corporate citizenship program, as we are committed to providing employees with opportunities to volunteer their talent and leadership skills to benefit the community," said Novartis spokeswoman **Anna Frable**.