

Travelers Community Connections

2015 Community Giving Report

TRAVELERS

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Employee Profiles

Select a profile below to learn more.



STEVE LEZAJ



BETTY MILLICAN



SEAN DATCHER



MELISSA RODRIGUEZ



ART PEDROZA



JACQUIE SASSER



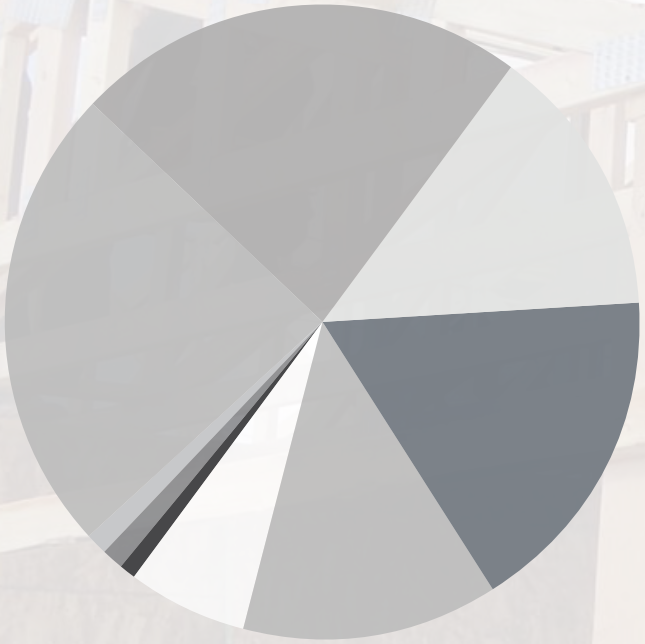
JAY S. BENET



JODY RODRIGUES

In 2015, Travelers contributed nearly **$23 million** through corporate funding and the Travelers Foundation to support efforts that improved academic and career success, built thriving neighborhoods and created culturally enriched communities.

FUND DISTRIBUTION – HOVER TO LEARN MORE

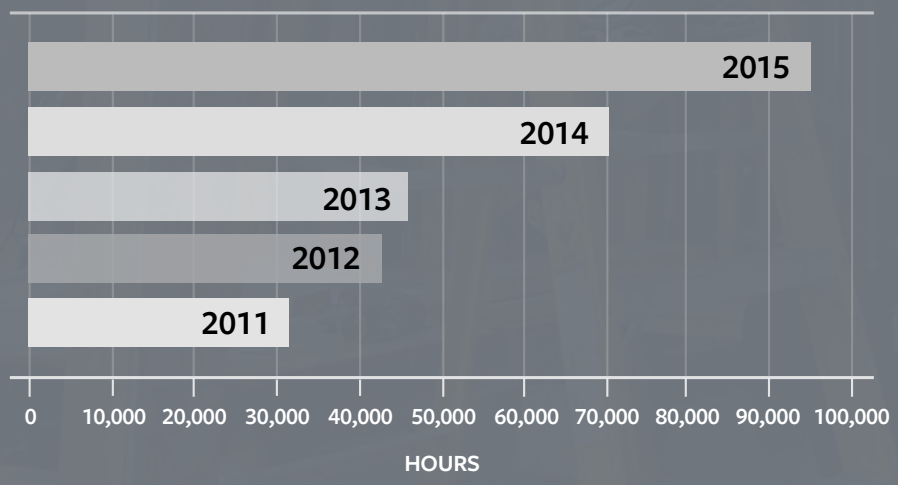




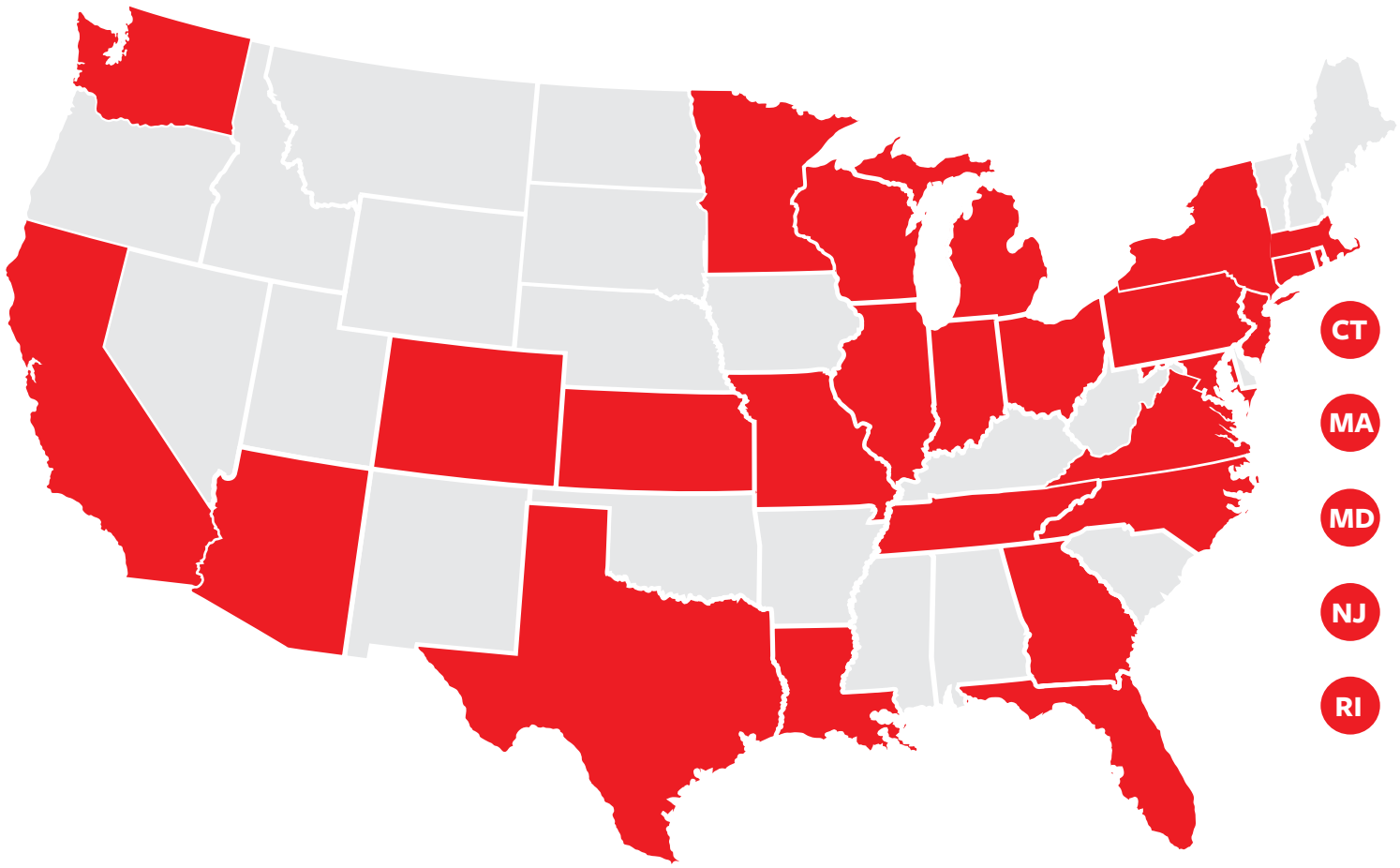
Employee Volunteer Hours

Travelers employees are active members of their communities and donate thousands of hours of their time each year to important causes.

HOVER OVER A BAR TO SEE HOURS



Hover over the states shown in red to learn more about our employee involvement.



Travelers Community Connection Grants

More than **$425,000 in grant funding** was provided to support **43 employee volunteer projects** throughout **17 states** through the Travelers Community Connections employee grant program.

Habitat for Humanity®

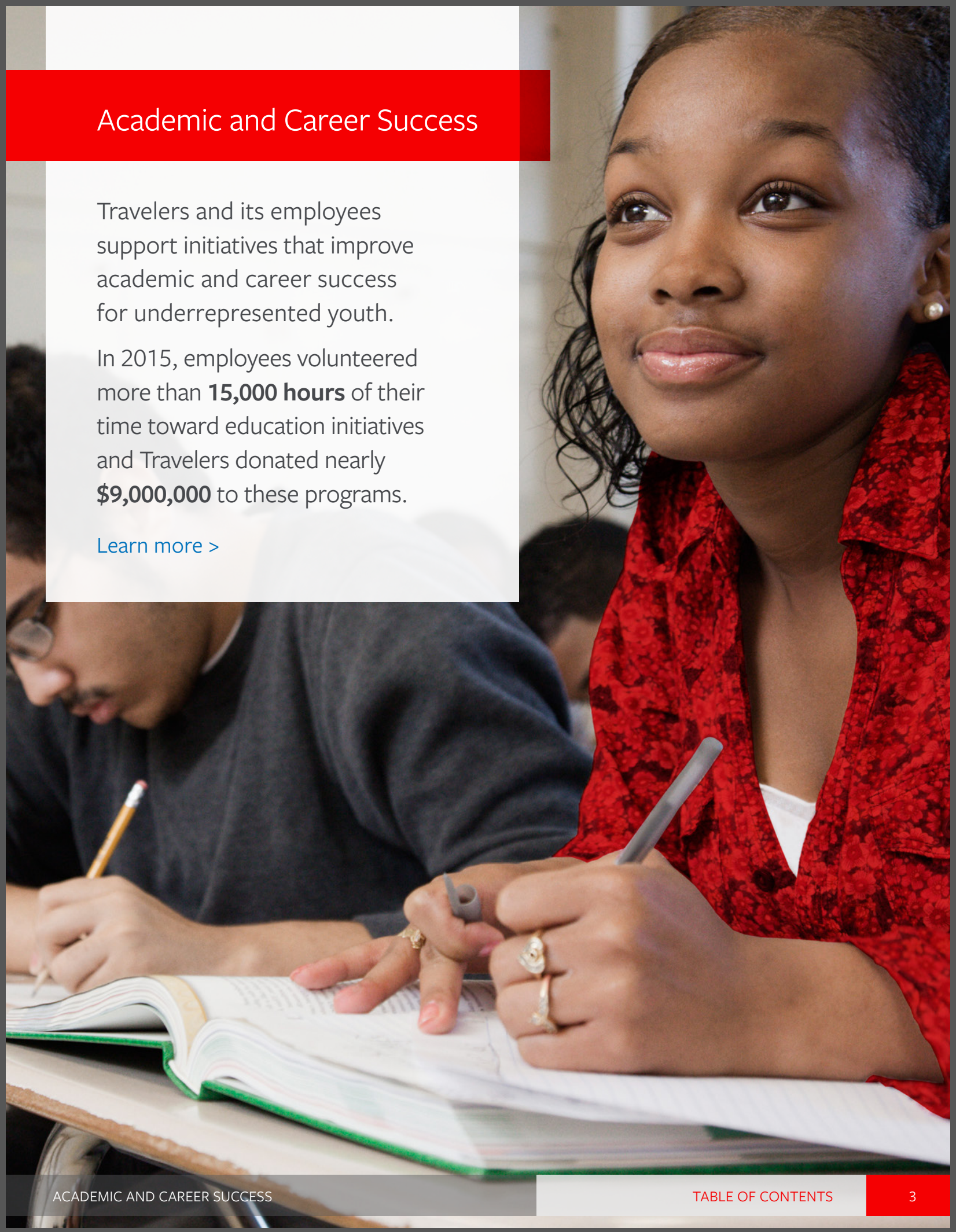
Travelers employees provided more than **5,140 hours** of volunteer time to build homes for families in **22 states.**

Academic and Career Success

Travelers and its employees support initiatives that improve academic and career success for underrepresented youth.

In 2015, employees volunteered more than **15,000 hours** of their time toward education initiatives and Travelers donated nearly **$9,000,000** to these programs.

Learn more >





Steve Lezaj

Managing Account Executive,
National Accounts, and
Junior Achievement Ambassador
(*Alpharetta, Georgia*)

“The only reason these events come together is because of the dedicated volunteers. I’ve done this so many times now that I know how incredible the experience is and I know what to expect, but it’s hearing from the other volunteers that makes it so amazing. Most of our volunteers will tell me that they learned just as much, if not more, than the students they helped, or how they were able to immediately see the impact of what they were teaching these students and how it will help them throughout their lives.”

Steve has been involved with Junior Achievement since he was a student, but for the past three years he has been helping coordinate teams of Travelers volunteers in the Georgia region for full-day Junior Achievement events.

What do you do? I help bring Travelers employees together to volunteer for a day helping sixth and eighth graders learn about budgeting. Junior Achievement has a center in downtown Atlanta that replicates the city, with storefronts, real estate offices, banks and more. Students come in for a full day and act out real-life scenarios that help teach them about budget management and making financial decisions. These events come after they’ve learned about these skills in the classroom, so they are able to put what they learned to the test. About once a month, I bring about 20 Travelers volunteers together for the day to staff these storefronts and help guide the students through their scenario and decisions.

Why do you do it? We’re making a difference in these students’ lives, and they’re making a difference in ours. It’s a truly incredible program and I enjoy being able to bring so many people together to share the experience.

Junior Achievement is a nonprofit organization dedicated to educating students about workforce readiness, entrepreneurship and financial literacy through experiential, hands-on programs.

Betty Millican

Operations Manager, Small Commercial, and Volunteer Enthusiast
(*Richardson, Texas*)



“I’ve been working with Girls Inc. for about 15 years, and it is truly inspiring to watch these young girls grow up, graduate high school and then college, and make their dreams come true because of the resources they have access to through Girls Inc.”

Betty Millican has been helping girls realize their full potential by volunteering with Girls Inc. since 2001, but she also devotes her time to many other organizations in the community that are dedicated to providing children with opportunities.

What do you do? Through Girls Inc., I work with and mentor young girls to help them overcome challenges, prevent bullying and inspire them to push toward their dreams and succeed. It was when I was blessed with my three grandchildren (triplets!) that I really recognized my ability to work with children and realized how much I loved it. I wanted to bring that to others and do something in the community to help, so I started searching for organizations where I could make a difference. I now volunteer not only with Girls Inc., but with many other organizations that focus their work on ensuring that children have opportunities and helping them to overcome challenges. It’s something that means a lot to me and I try to encourage as many others as I can to get involved.

Why do you do it? It’s my passion. In today’s world, with all its challenges, if we are able to give even just one child hope or make just one change, it’s all worth it. Helping children realize that they have the opportunity to do what they dream about and be who they want is powerful, and it stems from your heart.

Girls Inc. is a nonprofit organization that inspires all girls to be strong, smart and bold, providing more than 140,000 girls across the U.S. and Canada with life-changing experiences and solutions to the unique challenges girls face.

Sean Datcher

Vice President and Chief Information Officer, eBusiness Technology, and Weekly Reader
(*Hartford, Connecticut*)



“It has been an incredible experience to see the student I read to each week mature from first to third grade, and even more rewarding to hear his teachers talk about the impact that the program is having on him. They say he’s excited for school and for reading. The program gives him something to look forward to during the week.”

Sean started working with Read to a Child about three years ago and now serves as chairman of the organization’s Connecticut regional board of directors, helping to improve and expand the program.

What do you do? I volunteer with the organization Read to a Child. I heard about them through Travelers’ Employee Giving Campaign and I decided to sign up as a volunteer reading mentor for an underserved elementary school student. I have been working with the same student for three years, visiting his school each week during lunchtime and reading with him for a half hour. It has grown into more than just reading; we have built a relationship and I’ve become a mentor as well. I’ve also become more involved with the organization and serve as the chairman of the Connecticut regional board of directors. In this role I am able to help the organization on a greater level and look for ways that we can improve, find additional schools and organizations to partner with, and help organize fundraising events.

Why do you do it? I was born and raised in Washington, DC, and came through a challenging school environment — I want to help other students get through that challenge. Read to a Child allowed me to have a personal, one-on-one connection with a student and hopefully inspire him to do well in school.

Read to a Child is a national literacy and mentoring nonprofit organization that inspires caring adults to read aloud to children and to help create better opportunities for the future.



Travelers EDGE®

Travelers' signature education program, Travelers EDGE (Empowering Dreams for Graduation and Employment) provides a holistic approach to education through partnerships with colleges, universities and community-based programs to increase the pipeline of underrepresented students who complete bachelor's degrees and are prepared for a career at Travelers or within the insurance and financial services industry.

Learn more >

WATCH THE TRAVELERS EDGE VIDEO

Academic year 2014–2015

42 Travelers EDGE scholars interned at Travelers

124 Travelers EDGE scholars received direct financial support

92% of Travelers EDGE scholars on track for a bachelor's degree

September 2007–December 2015

394 current and former Travelers EDGE scholars

159 Travelers EDGE scholars with a bachelor's degree

152 Travelers EDGE scholars with Travelers internship experience

Melissa Rodriguez

Business Analyst, National Property, and Travelers EDGE® Mentor
(*Hartford, Connecticut*)



“Giving back is something that has always been important to me. After completing Travelers EDGE, I wanted to give back and stay connected to the program. That’s when I decided to be a Travelers EDGE mentor. As a mentor I am able to help students who went through situations similar to mine and provide them with support and guidance, and make them feel that they can achieve anything they put their minds to.”

Melissa Rodriguez was one of the first Travelers EDGE scholars; now she volunteers as a mentor to current scholars.

What do you do? I provide guidance to students and young professionals to help them through school and in their careers. Since 2008, I have had the opportunity to work with numerous Travelers EDGE scholars, and I have kept in touch with all of them. We work through many challenges that come up in school, in their career or at home. We talk about goals and share experiences, I help make connections and provide networking opportunities, and so much more. It’s not just me helping them, though — it goes both ways.

Why do you do it? I do it because I want my mentees to share the same positive experiences that I have, through the relationships I have built with my mentors. I enjoy seeing my mentees grow on a professional level as well as a personal level. Helping others is something I love to do, and being a mentor allows me to do just that.

Travelers EDGE (Empowering Dreams for Graduation and Employment) is Travelers’ career pipeline program that helps underrepresented students succeed.

Thriving Neighborhoods

Travelers and its employees support organizations that help create and maintain safe, stable and vital neighborhoods.

To help build thriving neighborhoods in 2015, employees donated more than **5,000 hours** of their time and the company provided more than **$3,300,000** in financial support.

Learn more >



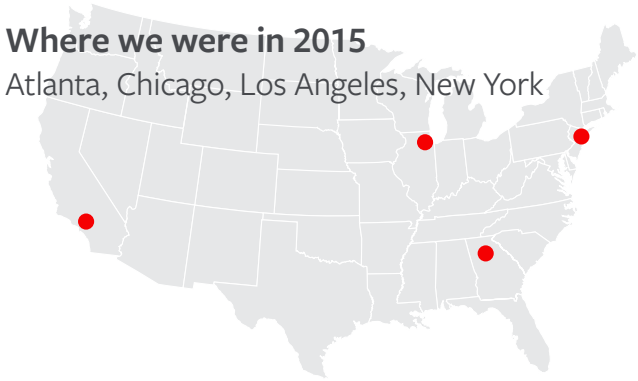


Small Business Risk Education

The Small Business Risk Education (SBRE) program helps women and minority small business owners learn about risk management, develop safety risk management plans and qualify for microloans.

Learn more >

Where we were in 2015
Atlanta, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York



WATCH THE SBRE VIDEO

Since we launched SBRE in 2012 we have held **28 sessions** and helped **520 participants.**

Throughout 2015 we held **12 sessions** and helped **221 participants.**



SBRE partners distributed **more than $450,000** in small business loans and microloans to SBRE participants **in 2015.**

Art Pedroza

Senior Risk Control Consultant,
and Small Business Advisor
(*Irvine, California*)



“We are just trying to help the community, and I think what we do is truly making a difference in a lot of lives. We’re trying to help small businesses succeed by providing them with basic information about their risks.”

Art has been working with Travelers’ Small Business Risk Education program since his start with Travelers about five years ago; he helps guide small business owners through the various risks they face.

What do you do? We hold free sessions geared toward minority- and women-owned small businesses to talk about the various risks they face. We provide the educational session, but we also work with those who want to learn more. We help them create a risk management plan and understand the risks that are specific to their particular business. I have worked one-on-one with many business owners who never thought that certain things could impact their business, and have helped them work through those challenges and create solutions to help safeguard their livelihood.

Why do you do it? My father and I have both owned small businesses, so I understand the challenges that these individuals are facing. It can be very scary — you put your whole life into what you do and are running full speed with it. Sometimes you don’t stop to think about certain risks. If something were to happen, you could lose everything.

Travelers’ Small Business Risk Education program provides safety risk management education for minority- and women-owned small businesses.



Travelers Fortifies Homes

Travelers is strengthening the resiliency of coastal communities by helping to build affordable, wind-resistant homes.

Learn more >

Since our partnership began in 2012 we have helped build **23 FORTIFIED homes.**

In 2015 we helped build **8 FORTIFIED homes.**

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY WITH FORTIFIED HOMES

HOW FORTIFIED CAN PROTECT YOUR HOME

Employees volunteered 5,140 hours of their time toward building FORTIFIED homes and other Habitat for Humanity projects across the country in 2015.



Jacquie Sasser

Forensic Accountant, Claim Accounting Services, and Volunteer Veteran

(*Hunt Valley, Maryland*)

“Rebuilding Together is really about two things: It’s a fun day to enjoy with your co-workers and it is a good team-building exercise. But it’s also about the people you are helping. They are just so grateful and truly appreciate the work we do for them. It makes you feel like you made a little bit of a difference in someone’s life.”

Jacquie (along with co-chair Jessica Rosengarten) coordinates all volunteer efforts in the Hunt Valley office, and has been helping organize the Rebuilding Together event for more than 10 years.

What do you do? I help coordinate the volunteer efforts that go on in our Hunt Valley office. For one of the events, Rebuilding Together’s annual Rebuilding Day, we have about 30 Travelers volunteers that come out each year, with so many others in the city, to participate. The day is spent helping lower-income, and oftentimes elderly, homeowners repair and modify their homes to make them more energy efficient as well as safer, to prevent falls. There are many others in the office who help make this event happen. Charlie Murray and Paul Schnell have volunteered with this event for more than 20 years, helping to plan out the day and make sure everything goes smoothly. It would not come together without the help of all those who participate.

Why do you do it? So many of our team members here are dedicated to making our community a better place. I enjoy being a part of that and helping to bring them all together.

Rebuilding Together transforms the lives of low-income homeowners by bringing together a national network of local affiliates, corporate and individual donors, skilled tradespeople and almost 100,000 volunteers each year to improve the safety and health of homes and revitalize communities.

Culturally Enriched Communities

Travelers and its employees support organizations that enrich lives through arts and culture.

Learn more >



In 2015 **Travelers donated** more than **$2,675,000** to support **22 theaters and arts programs** across the country.

Employees donated more than **3,150 hours** of their time in 2015 toward initiatives that helped to enrich communities.



Jay S. Benet

Vice Chairman and Chief Financial Officer, and Arts and Culture Advocate
(*Hartford, Connecticut*)

“It’s easy to forget that there is more to the world than what we experience here in these hallways. Getting involved with nonprofits provides an opportunity to make a difference in our communities and in people’s lives.”

Jay S. Benet has been involved with many arts and culture organizations in Connecticut over the years — serving as an advocate and helping to ensure that these organizations are able to make as big of an impact as they can.

What do you do? For many years now, I have been involved with organizations that support arts and culture here in Connecticut. Currently, I serve as chairman of the board of trustees of the Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts, a member of the board of trustees of Goodspeed Musicals and a member of the board of trustees of Mystic Seaport. As a board member, I provide business and financial support that helps the management teams of these nonprofit organizations define and monitor their missions and strategies. The board members work hard to ensure that these organizations remain highly relevant in this fast-changing world by providing a diverse array of arts and cultural experiences that positively impact our communities.

Why do you do it? I discovered early in my career how rewarding working with nonprofit organizations can be. The organization benefits from your expertise and you gain skills and experiences that you otherwise may not get until much later in your career. My participation with nonprofits over the years has been invaluable to my managerial development and continues to provide me the opportunity to step out of my day-to-day routine, get involved in different initiatives and contribute to the community.

The Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts is the state’s largest arts organization and serves as a unique gathering place for arts, education and community activities. Goodspeed Musicals is a nonprofit arts organization dedicated to the preservation and advancement of musical theater. Mystic Seaport is the nation’s leading maritime museum, founded in 1929 to gather and preserve the rapidly disappearing artifacts of America’s seafaring past.

Jody Rodrigues

Claim Manager, Upper Midwest Claim Center, and Lifelong Theater Advocate
(St. Paul, Minnesota)



“If you dial things back and actually show kids that they are capable of great things and show them that they can achieve anything they put their minds to — rather than just telling them — it helps them realize they can do it. Theater and the arts do just that, and show them that anything can be possible, without hiding the fact that you require grit, perseverance and tenacity to be successful in any endeavor.”

Jody Rodrigues grew up in South Africa with arts ingrained in the culture; and he helps bring that to children in St. Paul through arts enrichment programs.

What do you do? I have been involved with Project SUCCESS for about one year and am currently the co-chair of their board of directors. Through theater, we help students talk about and understand difficult situations that may be going on in their lives and in the world. We also place facilitators in schools to provide students with ongoing access to consistent resources. Over the past year, we have focused our efforts on ensuring that we are growing in the right places, getting into schools that may not have an arts program and making the biggest impact we can.

Why do you do it? Art and expression are the stuff of life. How we express ourselves helps us discover who we truly are and find our place in the world. The various components that comprise the arts are a wonderful medium that can help kids dream big and imagine themselves as the kind of person they truly want to be. As a young boy I grew up in South Africa — a place where oral history is rich and stories are told with a tremendous amount of expression. It was the simultaneous creation of art and expression that made every experience more vibrant and made people happier and more engaged, even during some very difficult political times. If art and theater have the power to do that, I can only imagine the difference they can make now in the lives of young people. I do it simply because I can think of no greater tool to reach kids and help them realize their dreams in a way that is real and relevant to their everyday circumstances.

Project SUCCESS is a nonprofit organization in Minneapolis that works to complement the work of teachers and counselors by enriching schools’ core curricula.

COMMUNITY
CONNECTIONS

TRAVELERS

travelers.com

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