



THE PHILANTHROPIC SPIRIT AWARD, SPONSORED BY WELLS FARGO, HONORS A BUSINESS THAT FOSTERS CHARITABLE GIVING THROUGH EMPLOYEE INCENTIVE PROGRAMS AND IS DEDICATED TO GIVING BACK TO THE UPSTATE IN A SIGNIFICANT MANNER.

LEVEL UP

Sealevel Systems
rises high

"Sealevel has been actively involved at every turn in supporting the community, and it pleases me on behalf of Wells Fargo to recognize them as winners of the 2012 Philanthropic Spirit Award."

***—Brian Rogers,
Wells Fargo Greenville***

The hair may have come from his dad, but Ben O'Hanlan credits his philanthropic spirit to his mom. "She had us in church every Sunday as a kid," says O'Hanlan, president of Sealevel Systems, a Liberty-based, computer-technology company. "We learned you need to return a portion of that which has been given to you." O'Hanlan grew up in Pickens County and attended the University of Colorado at Boulder. After earning a degree in history, he returned to the Upstate and found himself in the sales department at Datastream, although it was inevitable he would eventually end up at Sealevel Systems, the company his parents started in 1986. "I started at Sealevel in sales," says O'Hanlan, "then worked up through operations to chief operating officer, then president of the company last year."

Through Sealevel, O'Hanlan takes a balanced approach to giving back to the community, focusing on the arts, children's needs, and education. "We're big supporters of the Greenville Museum," says O'Hanlan, "as well as the Peace Center and the Carolina Ballet." To aid in the needs of children, Sealevel supports A Child's Haven, The Family Effect, and the Meyer Center, which offers developmental education and therapy services to children with disabilities. To support education in the Upstate, Sealevel sponsored an engineering camp at the Children's Museum this past summer and created an endowment through Clemson University, which provides an engineering scholarship for either computer or electrical engineering. "That's probably the most selfish of the three verticals," says O'Hanlan, "because we have a hard time recruiting engineers. So we're trying to plant the seeds at an early level and make it easier for kids in college to get an engineering degree and hopefully come work for us one day."

O'Hanlan's giving nature doesn't stop when he clocks out for the day, as he personally supports local charities, especially those focused on helping mothers and their young children. "I serve on the board of The Family Effect," says O'Hanlan, "which is a nonprofit that supports The Phoenix Center's efforts to treat addiction and abuse in the Upstate. So whereas The Phoenix Center treats every type of addiction, we focus on addiction as it impacts mothers and their young children." O'Hanlan and The Family Effect also support Serenity Place, a shelter that allows women to bring up to two young children and go through an intensive six-month, addiction-treatment process. This is O'Hanlan's third year with The Family Effect.

In his free time, O'Hanlan works on his golf game and enjoys wing shooting, but raising two kids, running a company, and serving on The Family Effect board leave little time. He doesn't mind, though—he's happiest when giving back to this community he loves. "I'm real proud of the city that Greenville has become," he says. "Anybody that comes here just falls in love with it, falls in love with the energy." O'Hanlan and his philanthropic spirit are certainly a big part of that energy.