



# Giving Back

while moving ahead

Some companies make philanthropy a high priority



Doing good while doing business comes naturally to some companies. Many exhibitors at AmericasMart choose to make philanthropy a strong tenet of their corporate missions. Here's a look at just a few.

### Improving quality of life

While traveling to Nicaragua, Elizabeth Thomson and Jerry Wang began rethinking the direction of their business careers. "What if what we were good at could have a positive impact on the world?" says Thomson.

In 2015, they started the social enterprise Nica Life Jewelry, wanting to establish fair wages for local artisans. "The jewelry styles combine the outdoorsy, laid-back lifestyle of Nicaragua's beaches with U.S. Boho. Artisans sold their work to tourists, but we knew that there would be more buying power in the

states," she says. They sell their items wholesale in the Southeast and California, online and from a retail shop in Grant Park (Atlanta).

A full-time manager hires and trains local artisans who are paid a fair wage for their work. It allows them to better feed and clothe their families working from home, instead of in the coffee fields for very low pay.

Nica Life also funds scholarships to English schools for local children, with the intention of giving them access to the country's best paying jobs in the tourist trade. "We've had production troubles due to the recent civil unrest. We held a volunteer event in Atlanta, and were touched by the women who came to make jewelry and send the wages to our artisans," she says. "Day-to-day, we're finding ways to make it work, because it's so incredibly rewarding, and we believe in the long-term impact." >





### Supporting military families

Carmel and Terrell Swan created CatStudio out of their love of travel, art and hand embroidery. Today, thousands of artisans create the more than 208 colorful textile and gift designs. "The core of our company is creating joy and love and putting kindness out into the world," says Ginny Ball, director of Sales and Marketing.

"When we noticed repeat pillow orders from one customer, we reached out and we learned about the Fisher House Foundation ([fisherhouse.org](http://fisherhouse.org)), an organization that provides free housing and services to military veteran families while they are in a medical center or VA hospital," says Ball. The company launched a military collection and began donating products, contributions and support to the cause. "We put them on our website to raise awareness. We find that retailers and customers want to give back to something that brings joy to people, and it makes our heart sing," says Ball.



### Providing hope and help

Four creative friends launched Glory Haus with a few handmade, inspirational canvases, ornaments and picture frames in 2008. "We started with a 25' wall, and now fill a 1,500 square-foot showroom at AmericasMart," says Molly Holm, owner and chief creative officer. Their 2,000 plus products sell at 6,000 retail outlets.

***"The heart behind the company is to bring hope and truth to people's homes, but as we've encountered missions that fit our purpose, we are proud to be positively changing people's lives."***

MOLLY HOLM

Glory Haus established the Daughters of Hope factory in India that employs impoverished women. It partners with MUST Ministries to create Repurposed with a Purpose, an artisan workroom that provides training and employment to workers in need. The Glory Haus Bus hosts fundraising sales for multiple charities, giving 20 percent of sales back to those organizations. At age nine, Luke Holm founded the non-profit "Pickles with a Purpose," which has raised more than \$60,000 for homeless people. The company grants each employee 40 hours a year for volunteering.

"It's not just a job at Glory Haus. All our employees support our missions and believe in what we're doing. That makes it a better place to work," says Holm. "Our customers feel it, too. We find that people want to belong to something bigger than themselves. We're grateful that that they buy our products so that we can all give back." ■

For more information:  
 CatStudio – [CatStudio.com](http://CatStudio.com), 707.778.1100 and [fisherhouse.org](http://fisherhouse.org);  
 Nica Life – [nicallproject.com](http://nicallproject.com), 404.849.5702;  
 Glory Haus – [gloryhaus.com](http://gloryhaus.com), 678.324.4283

Images courtesy of Nica Life, CatStudio and Glory Haus



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