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THOMAS E. BUSH
Winston-Salem, N.C.

Our heroes next door

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SAYING NO TO CHILD ABUSE

BY JIM HATFIELD

Traditionally, newlyweds receive gifts of china and crystal, but when Thomas E. Bush and his wife were planning their wedding they registered at Toys R Us. Before long, their living room was filled with bicycles, Barbie dolls, and other toys—all for abused children.

"We had everything we needed, but there were a lot of kids who needed to know that someone loves them," says Bush, who for more than 25 years has been dedicated to Stop Child Abuse Now (SCAN), a project of the Exchange Club of North Carolina.

"So we asked people to give toys instead of wedding gifts and made a lot of youngsters very, very happy," recalls Bush, a successful sales executive with Coldwell Banker Triad, REALTORS®, Commercial Division in Winston-Salem.

Whether he's raising money or recruiting volunteers, Bush, 59, is one of the most ardent supporters of SCAN, which battles child abuse by offering a wide range of prevention and treatment programs.

"Tom isn't someone who works for a cause just every now and then," says George M. Bryan Jr., SCAN's executive director. "He works daily, contacting donors, writing thank-you notes, and planning ways to raise money to help our efforts." Bryan says Bush has helped raise more than \$3 million and personally recruited 10 of the 32 current board members.

One of those is Millard Martin, who sells residential real estate for Coldwell Banker Triad. "The day I started with the company, I ran into Tom in the elevator, and he insisted I go with him to an Exchange Club luncheon. I've been involved with SCAN ever since, and a big part of the reason is that you just can't say no to Tom Bush," laughs Martin.

"He's amazing," says Shannon Reese, association executive for the Winston-Salem Regional Association of REALTORS®. "He seems to know everyone. Last year our Tee Off Against Child Abuse golf tournament raised \$31,000 for SCAN, and it was all

because Tom knew where to go for sponsors and how to convince them of the importance of the project."

People who work closely with Bush say the secrets to his success are enthusiasm and attention to detail. "You'll never see Tom without a stack of 3-by-5 cards in his shirt pocket," says Bryan. "He keeps lists of things we need. It might be a bed for a needy family or it might be a new board member. Whatever it is, you can bet Tom won't toss that card until he's accomplished everything on the list."

"Child abuse isn't something people like to think about," says Martin, "but Tom understands it's a problem we have to face and keep fighting, so he keeps the conversation going."

Bush's effort is paying off, with SCAN now the largest private provider of child abuse prevention and treatment services in North Carolina, serving more than 10,000 people a year. "We offer parenting classes that help people with child discipline and parental anger issues," says Bryan. "We have a Welcome Baby program that helps educate new and often very young parents. Today, we're the largest county in North Carolina, but we have the lowest incidence of child abuse. We don't think that would be the case were it not for SCAN and people like Tom Bush."

Tom gives others credit for the work SCAN is doing, but he admits to feeling good about the role he's played in helping the organization grow. Today there are nine SCAN centers throughout North Carolina, a dramatic change from 1979 when Bush helped bring the first one to the state. At the time, it was only the fourth such facility in the country.

"Back then child abuse was something that got swept under the carpet," he says. "People didn't like to talk about it, and companies didn't want to fund programs to help prevent it—they thought the subject was just too negative. Today that's changed, and I like to think the people I've been able to recruit have been the reason. That's what I feel good about."

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"CHILD ABUSE ISN'T SOMETHING PEOPLE LIKE TO THINK ABOUT, BUT TOM UNDERSTANDS IT'S A PROBLEM WE HAVE TO FACE AND KEEP FIGHTING."—MILLARD MARTIN

Exchange Club Child Abuse
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