



## PROFILE OF A CHAMPION: Simple Hospitality Invites Real Solutions

On an almost daily basis you read articles or position statements around the importance of business taking an active role in caring for their community. But what does that look like on the ground in our cities and neighborhoods? Often, businesses feel the weight of responsibility without clarity around how best to apply their limited time and resources to the issues. Thankfully, Creature Comforts Brewing Company brings us a honed, data-driven model that offers well-intentioned businesses a road-map that's as replicable as it is hopeful.

Creature Comforts Brewing Company wasn't looking for the spotlight. They've been heads down brewing delicious beer, sharing profits back to the community and inviting others into their physical space. They've converted genuine hospitality into tangible outcomes for Athens, Georgia.

It's their honest lens as well as a reliance on data and collaboration that makes them our first 2020 goBeyondProfit Champion.

### Overall Philosophy

Creature Comforts Brewing Company believes good companies are good citizens. As a local brewery, their business model and signature products naturally bring people together. When asked the question of how to "give back", the leaders of Creature Comforts get real about what they bring to the table. They understood their finite skills and resources and focus on a model of collaboration – bringing people together – to tackle the needs in Athens, Georgia. They owned up front that they are not experts on the societal issues and sought out experts steeped in knowledge about the generational and cyclical needs holding back their fellow Athenians from thriving equitably.



*"I believe when business leaders recognize the potential (and dare I say responsibility) to do more than generate profits, there is the opportunity to truly leave a legacy."*

**Chris Herron, CEO,  
Creature Comforts Brewing Company**

## Cultivating Company Culture

### Making Serving Simple

Everyone on the Creature Comforts team is encouraged to be good professionals and good neighbors. Serving is made simple, accessible and impactful. They can take part in any number of volunteer opportunities either through the company's defined programs or one-off volunteer projects offered around town. Long before they established branded programs like their *Get Artistic* effort helping the community thrive or their *Get Comfortable* model geared to help their neighbors survive, the team invited local agencies to use their space at no-cost in order to lend what they could to good causes. Their community outreach activities launched like any other start-up – as an idea that gained traction from passionate employees starting small, working together to achieve an audacious goal. As the beer business succeeded, they were able to bring on dedicated staff to focus on the social impact efforts. Today's tested campaign models benefit from the infusion of focused leadership and are poised to expand.





## Community Empowerment

### Inviting Others Into The Process

What's their model? First, they focus on the Athens community as a whole versus a specific cause. They dig into needs-assessment data for hard facts pushing themselves to remain as "dispassionate as the data" and thereby open to directing resources where they matter most. From here they invite experts into the process adopting an advisor-directed framework to glean wisdom from external partners. They turn to local social service leaders and local government officials to help understand which agencies in town are doing the heavy lifting and seeing the greatest results. Finally, they hold themselves accountable with an annual program evaluation reviewing impact data to ensure their investments are effective.



*"We are literally open twice as long, serving twice as many people...It's been a wonderful blessing to partner with Get Comfortable."*

**-Andrew Wilkins, Bigger Vision of Athens**

*"It's the only grant from a business that's this robust and comprehensive...much more of a partnership than just a grant gift."*

**-Lawrence Harris, College Factory**

## Deploying Company Resources

### Collaborating For Exponential Impact

They have a heart for the issues but as business leaders, they recognize the limits of their resources and skills to make meaningful headway toward social solutions. Leveraging their expertise in hospitality, they designed a simple, flexible structure making it easy for others to join in the good. They wisely sought out the Athens Area Community Foundation to create a donor advised fund making it easier to invite their customers and business associates to pool their resources. Four years later they have collectively mobilized approximately \$1M to meet the greatest needs in Athens, creating indelible partnerships with for-profit and non-profit partners and realizing true impact for the community -- as well as for their employees and their brand.



*"It can be a paralyzing starting place to realize oh my gosh the world is broken, I want to get involved but I don't know where to begin. Which is why making serving simple, is such a huge value for our company."*

**Matthew Stevens, VP, Strategic Impact  
Creature Comforts Brewing Company**

## Leadership Perspective

### Chris Herron, CEO, Creature Comforts Brewing Company

"Since we opened our doors, the founding team members shared a hope that our community would benefit as a result of us operating here. Our community impact strategy started through a program called *Get Comfortable*, which strives to help those whose fundamental needs are unmet get more comfortable. We soon realized that not only do we want the citizens of our community to survive, but also to thrive. We have come to understand that there's a clear relationship between a vibrant arts scene and one's connection to that community – so we created *Get Artistic* to help residents become connected citizens. Connected citizens are more willing to be civically engaged, which was the start of the *Get Comfortable* shared investment model. As a result, we are working together as a community to help all our neighbors not only survive but ideally to thrive and to bring about greater social equity.

"For us, being a leader of a great and growing company is far more important than focusing on growth alone. Being a good neighbor is simply the right thing to do, and we also have come to see that it even lifts the business in multiple ways. We have seen a positive financial impact, and improved ability to attract and retain top talent, and most importantly, a daily sense of purpose that drives our work. I believe when business leaders recognize the potential (and dare I say responsibility) to do more than generate profits, there is the opportunity to truly leave a legacy."

For more information follow these links to the [Get Artistic](#) and [Get Comfortable](#) models. And, don't forget with every sip, you're giving a little good back to meet real needs. Cheers!