



## PROFILE OF A CHAMPION: Leveraging Expertise as a Blueprint for Building Better Communities

Headquartered in Athens and operating in towns across the Southeast, W&A Engineering reminds us that a business built on a generous foundation contains all the elements needed to make a remarkable impact on people's lives. As a small business, W&A Engineering's focus on corporate citizenship rivals peers with vast infrastructures. Leveraging their engineering experience as problem solvers, they support their big philanthropic intentions with a well-designed structure that undergirds their values with consistent, clear action. W&A Engineering proves the theory that businesses of every size can be a powerful force for good.

### Overall Philosophy

For W&A Engineering, corporate citizenship isn't simply a nice philosophy—its core to their mission to Build Better Communities. This promise influences operations, directs interactions with clients, informs the workplace environment, and guides the larger impact the company has on local communities.

W&A Engineering reached a major milestone in 2020, turning twenty years old. In a year when any business would be justified in hunkering down to focus solely on core operations, W&A dug deep and turned their anniversary into a monthly celebration of their fellow local businesses called the Local Business Partnership initiative. This program represents just one of the ways that W&A and their CEO Jon Williams worked throughout 2020 to lift up those who were hurting. As a result, their peers noticed and selected them as a 2021 goBeyondProfit Champion.

## Leadership Perspective

### "Leave it better than you found it"

"A phrase I've heard all my life is "leave it better than you found it," explains Jon Williams. "We apply that philosophy daily in our work product, in caring for our employees and families, and in building better communities.

"If you're fortunate enough to be really good at what you do, you have to make time and bandwidth to give back. Putting ourselves out there as a company who really cares about the community, we give back—regardless of what else is going on, and we try to find ways to help. Ultimately, I think this leads to attracting and retaining the best employees, customers, clients and frankly more business. It results in a generationally sustainable company who leaves things better than they were when we started."

## Deploying Company Resources

### Consistent approach increases impact

Since the early days forming his company, W&A Engineering President & CEO Jon Williams sought to fulfill his personal passion to give back to the community, through philanthropic contributions, donations of in-kind services to communities and nonprofits, and the application of professional expertise and critical thinking to seemingly intractable problems. In 2018 W&A formally established W&A Cares, its corporate citizenship program, and started to measure the business' "philanthropic impact." The elements of their equation include charitable donations + volunteer hours + in-kind professional hours spent fulfilling W&A Cares initiatives. How do you make choices among the many needs? What guides decision making? W&A Engineering lets five key areas guide a cohesive and consistent approach including: Community, Economic Development, Education, Sustainability, and Employee Wellbeing. The collective impact of this mighty team of more than fifty employees equals 8,594 hours of commitment, and that commitment, combined with charitable donations, is valued at an impressive \$925,574 worth of giving and service since the beginning of 2016.



*A phrase I've heard all my life is "leave it better than you found it". We apply that daily in our work product, in caring for our employees and families and in building better communities.*

**Jon Williams, President & CEO  
W&A Engineering**





**Employee Well-being:** Employees participate in the company's Annual Employee Health Screening, free to all employees.



**Sustainability:** W&A's sustainability initiatives include an array of solar panels on its historic office building, supplying 40-50% of energy needs, and a subscription to Awesome Possum, a local composting service.

**Local Business Partnership:** The 20th Anniversary Local Business Partnership initiative championed a different local business every month and donated \$500 to each business's nonprofit of choice.

## Cultivating Company Culture

### Generosity practiced inside the business

Increasingly, corporate citizenship practiced on the inside of a business has become the hallmark of a truly generous company. Notably, Employee Wellbeing shows up as a pillar of W&A Cares. W&A prioritizes a positive workplace community alongside commitments to positively impact the external community. Employees benefit from investments in employee health, wellness, team building, financial security, and professional development, as well as the experience of volunteering together. In 2020, alone, W&A adopted a progressive Family Leave Policy and a Tuition Reimbursement Policy, notable additions to an already generous package of employee benefits.



## Focusing on Community Empowerment

### Sharing the limelight and restoring hope

Like so many businesses in 2020, W&A Engineering pivoted and responded to new variables and threats facing their people and their communities. For W&A Engineering, this was the year of their 20th anniversary. True to their cornerstone values, their celebration focused on an expansive and perhaps untraditional philanthropic notion of building better communities. Each month W&A selected a different local business in its hometown of Athens, Georgia. Selected businesses were invited to name a nonprofit "beneficiary." W&A raised up the business and the nonprofit in a month-long advertising effort, generating awareness and business traffic and ending in a week-long radio spot highlighting that W&A would match the first \$500 in sales revenue earned during the week of the 20th with a donation to the nonprofit.

Their anniversary giving campaign welcomed all the local business partners and customers into the celebratory limelight. In the end, a yearlong celebration that could have been all about their company alone strengthened the very fiber of local communities – boosting economies, meeting needs, and restoring hope.