

BY ANDY STONEHOUSE | PHOTOGRAPHY BY DEREK SKALCO

A HIGHER PURPOSE

>>> CLOUD NINE BROWNIES

For Jill and Jim Pomeroy, the crafty cooks behind Aspen-based Cloud Nine Brownies, there's more to sharing than simply making sure there are plenty of their addictive, mouth-watering products to go around.

For years, the Pomeroyes have donated money to local organizations such as Roaring Fork Kids pre-school and the Waldorf School. (Jim was a pre-school teacher in his pre-brownies life, and Jill serves on Roaring Fork Kids' Board of Directors.) "In the past, with local groups, we've provided cash donations based on our gross sales. At times, that's been a little...hit-or-miss," Jim says frankly. But now they've landed a sweet arrangement with the Acumen Fund, a non-profit international venture fund that enjoys financial involvement from some of the biggest private firms and charities in the country.

"Our relationship with the Acumen Fund has been very interesting. We met their representatives through the Aspen Institute. We provided 100 boxes of brownies as gifts to the Fund's top contributors," Jim explains. The Acumen Fund receives money from companies such as Cisco and Amazon, and from other large organizations like the Gates and Rockefeller foundations.



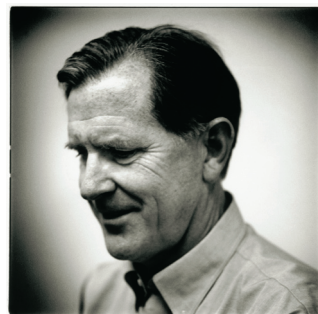
Cloud Nine brownies have become the ultimate locals' gift to Aspen visitors.



*GOOD COMPANY



Mark Purnell's team makes international outreach possible.



“It turns out a lot of those people also have an Aspen connection, and they really like the brownies. There aren’t too many things offered in Aspen that are actually made in Aspen,” he adds, smiling.

The Pomeroy's began their business four years ago, building on Jill's culinary school background. They created the brownies out of a kitchen at the Aspen Airport Business Center. They built a reputation for their products through sales at farmers' markets, local stores, and a thriving on-line sales department, Jim says. But the association with the Acumen Fund has created a symbiotic relationship that will, ultimately, allow the family to provide more assistance to their favorite local charities.

“Their requests for gift boxes usually come at our busiest time of the year, but it's something we felt was good for us,” Jim says. “I think it shows a perfect example of a partnership between a business and a non-profit. You give for your soul, but it's only possible if it's good for your business at the same time.”

GOING THE DISTANCE

>>> ORTHOPAEDIC ASSOCIATES OF ASPEN & GLENWOOD

Aspen's Sister Cities program has worked to create friendly, cooperative affiliations with a number of like-minded communities around the world, and has provided local businesses with some unique opportunities to offer international aid. In the case of Bariloche, Argentina, a tourism-driven mountain city of more than 100,000 residents that was proclaimed an Aspen sister city in November 2002, a close relationship fostered by one local organization has gone a long way to providing important medical equipment and education to its South American counterparts.

Mark Purnell, M.D., a surgeon with Orthopaedic Associates of Aspen and Glenwood, saw the potential for cooperation with Bariloche from the beginning. He has been instrumental not only in helping to arrange educational exchange programs for physicians at Bariloche's Ramon Carillo Hospital, but also in an ongoing effort to supply the facility much-needed medical equipment.

“Our first connections with Bariloche came at a time of economic crisis in Argentina. Its hospital was being asked to cover a regional population of more than 500,000 people,” Purnell reports. “I first visited in 2003 with the sister city delegation. While everyone else was off at fancy dinners, Scott Gallagher and I were at the hospital seeing what we could do to help.” Dr. Gallagher is an Aspen Valley Hospital emergency-room physician. “Their level of care was very good, and their doctors were very well-educated and motivated, but there was just no money.”

Orthopaedic Associates has been a sponsor of a broad range of groups such as the Aspen Valley Ski and Snowboard Club and countless local recreational sports teams. But the Argentinian opportunity struck Purnell as a unique chance to do some much-needed international work. Purnell says he chose to concentrate on matching his own expertise with his organization's resources and connections, working on rounding up items such as arthroscopic cameras and surgical implants and providing them to Bariloche's doctors.