

OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY IMPACT

Tillamook Creamery Association

Tillamook, Oregon



Cheesemakers' home brings pride and a desire to help neighbors

Tillamook County Creamery Association, situated on the Oregon coast, does more than provide jobs and create delicious dairy products. The cooperative contributes to its community through donations and volunteer work. In fact, Tillamook's vision includes making a positive impact on housing, education, hunger and more.

There are many reasons Tillamook would extend itself this way. Regional pride in the Tillamook brand is important; the creamery's visitors' center is a top attraction on Oregon's coast. In fact, they're building a state-of-the-art building to educate visitors from around the world.

The creamery's employees take their farmer-owners' work ethic to heart and always apply a problem-solver's view to their surroundings. Tillamook workers regularly use personal, unpaid time to work together at Oregon Food Bank, clean up a beach or support other employee-initiated volunteer programs.

And they're in Tillamook County, where the population is just over 25,000 and the company's reputation for creating high-quality cheese since the turn of the 20th century is legendary. Anyone who drives past the local high school can see it, as the building reads, "Home of the Cheesemakers."

"When you know your neighbor, there's that much more reason to help," says Eva Wilson, Stewardship Associate at Tillamook. The need is there, and this organization of more than 800 people is stepping up.

They're giving gifts that matter – from funding a study on the root causes of the local housing shortage, with an eye toward finding the right solutions, to providing a bigger truck to the local food bank so its operations can be more efficient and more people have access to produce. But they don't exactly see these efforts as donations.

"We don't call it philanthropy or charity. We call it social innovation," said Sarah Beaubien, Senior Director of Stewardship at Tillamook.

Within a year of launching an employee-initiated volunteer program, 118 members of the company volunteered more than 1,200 hours.

- Tillamook committed \$1.5 million to a new food innovation center at Oregon State University.
- Tillamook's gift of \$75,000 to CARE, which provides emergency aid to those in crisis, including the homeless, allowed the charity to continue their mission.
- The creamery partnered with Oregon Food Bank to research the root causes of food insecurity issues with the goal of eventually eliminating hunger statewide.

