SFNTC donates $50,000 to aid Japan

It was a bright, sunny, May afternoon in Santa Fe, N.M. But 6,000 miles away, the magnitude 9.0 earthquake and tsunami that devastated Japan in March continued to cast its dark shadow over that island nation of more than 127 million people.

That’s why Nick Bumbacco, president of Santa Fe Natural Tobacco Company (SFNTC), had invited members of the American Red Cross of New Mexico to the company’s headquarters in Santa Fe.

“We really appreciate you’re being here today and the relationship we have with the Red Cross,” Bumbacco told the group, which included Kathy Segura, the Red Cross service center manager in Santa Fe and Scott Reynolds, the board chairman of the Red Cross of New Mexico.

“One of our company’s core tenets is our connection and involvement with our employees and the communities where we live and work,” Bumbacco said. “SFNTC-Japan has about 40 people who are responsible for sales and marketing across that country. So when we heard about the destruction that had taken place in Japan, we wanted to do something to help.”

Bumbacco said that SFNTC’s affiliates in Switzerland and Germany sent food and supplies, along with a video they had made to boost the morale of their colleagues in Japan. The people in Santa Fe also sent needed supplies, including flashlights and food.

“As the media began to cover this terrible tragedy, it became increasingly clear that rebuilding the country and containing the threat from the damaged nuclear power plant is going to take years,” Bumbacco said. “So we decided to donate $50,000 and specifically designate it to help with the efforts to provide relief in Japan.

“We’re very fortunate that nobody in the company, or their direct relatives, were physically impacted,” he said. “Emotionally, that’s a very different story.”

Bill Morachnick agreed. As head of SFNTC’s international business, Morachnick was in Santa Fe on business when the donation to the Red Cross took place.

When Morachnick went to visit the people at SFNTC-Japan after the earthquake, he was shocked by what he saw in the country that he had called home for a number of years. “The one thing I can compare it to is the United States after 9/11,” he said. “There’s a very somber mood. People are still in a state of shock.”

Accepting the $50,000 check from Bumbacco, Reynolds noted that the Red Cross doesn’t receive any government support so, “Companies that step forward, like you, are what matters. Significant support from organizations like yours is what helps us get by.

"We are totally driven by the contributions and the thoughts and prayers of those who give to
us,” said Reynolds, “and with the disaster in Japan, like other disasters, it is significant and it is horrific, and the cost in human lives is enormous."

Segura added, "We've seen a lot of money roll in from the Santa Fe community for Japan and for the tornadoes, and it's just amazing. We're just glad to be able to be part of that."

"We know the money won't go directly to our employees,” Bumbacco said, “but we hope that our donation will make a difference and help those in need. We also hope that people will continue to support the people of Japan. Just because the media stops covering it doesn't mean it's ended."

The presentation of a $50,000 donation from Santa Fe Natural Tobacco Company (SFNTC), on behalf of its Japanese affiliate, SFNTC-Japan, was attended by (left to right): Nick Bumbacco, president of SFNTC in Santa Fe, New Mexico; Kathy Segura, Red Cross service center manager in Santa Fe; Scott Reynolds, chairman of Red Cross of New Mexico; and Bill Morachnick, managing director of SFR Tobacco International. The donation is earmarked to support Red Cross relief efforts in Japan.