

Making a Difference

Citizen Coke

An Interview with **Ingrid Saunders Jones**,
Senior Vice President, Global Community Connections,
The Coca-Cola Company, and Chairperson, The Coca-Cola Foundation

EDITORS' NOTE *Ingrid Saunders Jones directs The Coca-Cola Company's global community, philanthropic, and civic affairs functions. Under her leadership, The Coca-Cola Foundation has contributed more than \$278 million to support sustainable communities. Prior to joining Coca-Cola, Jones worked in various capacities, including as executive assistant to the Honorable Maynard Jackson, Mayor of the city of Atlanta, and as a schoolteacher in the Detroit and Atlanta public school systems.*



Ingrid Saunders Jones

Jones serves on the boards of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, the Apollo Theater, Clark Atlanta University, the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies at Georgia State University, and the Desmond Tutu Peace Foundation. In addition, she is a member of the Society of International Business Fellows. Jones earned her bachelor's degree from Michigan State University and master's degree from Eastern Michigan University.

COMPANY BRIEF *Based in Atlanta, The Coca-Cola Company (www.thecoca-colacompany.com) is the world's largest beverage company. Along with Coca-Cola®, recognized as the world's most valuable brand, the company markets four of the world's top five beverages, including Diet Coke®, Fanta®, and Sprite®, and a wide range of other beverages, including diet and light beverages, waters, juices and juice drinks, teas, coffees, and energy and sports drinks. Consumers worldwide enjoy Coca-Cola beverages at a rate of 1.5 billion servings each day.*

How ingrained are corporate responsibility and community involvement in the culture of The Coca-Cola Company, and how important do you see them as part of the organization?

Both are essential elements of the fabric and soul of The Coca-Cola Company. As the world has become more global, we have become more strategic in our approach to social responsibility. Today, our efforts are focused on global priorities that will yield the greatest benefit to the communities we serve: water stewardship, community recycling, fitness and active lifestyles, and education.

Has it been important to hone in on specific areas where you can make the most impact?

Yes, utilizing the perspectives and experi-

ences of our leaders worldwide, we agreed on global commitments that closely align with the company's business strategy. In addition, we agreed to support local initiatives, including HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention in Africa and education in Asia and North America.

How have you defined which areas to focus on, and what work are you doing around education?

To have a healthy business, we must serve communities that are healthy and sustainable. Coca-Cola is

committed to operating our business responsibly and making the planet better than we found it. We believe education is the single greatest force enabling people worldwide to improve their lives. In the United States, we initiated the Coca-Cola First Generation Scholarship Program in 1993, with private and public institutions of higher education. To date, we have awarded more than \$14 million in scholarships to students who are the first in their immediate family to go to college. This is one example of the many education initiatives we support globally.

Can you highlight some of your global clean water initiatives?

As a beverage company, water is essential to our operations. We have significantly increased our support of global water stewardship projects through partnerships with the World Wildlife Fund to help conserve seven of the world's most important watersheds. We also are in partnership with the United Nations Global Compact, which commits companies to help protect and preserve freshwater resources by making water resource management a strategic priority, and we have also partnered with the Global Environment and Technology Foundation.

Can you give a brief overview of packaging and recycling initiatives?

The Coca-Cola Company uses recycled content PET in more than 17 markets around the globe. Recycling plastic for reuse yields financial benefits, requires less energy, and reduces waste and greenhouse gases. We have invested in building PET recycling plants in Australia, Austria, Mexico, the Philippines, Switzerland, and the United States. We also have community recycling programs world wide.

How do you communicate to employees what you're doing and make sure that they are engaged?



Our associates are valuable community ambassadors. We have multiple Web-based tools to keep our associates informed. We also focus on two-way dialogue so that our associates can tell us what's important to them. We recently expanded our matching gifts program to include environmental organizations, in addition to arts and culture, and education organizations, as a result of direct feedback from our associates.

When it comes to corporate social responsibility, how important is it to put metrics in place and to track the results and the impact?

When we ask people to commit to our global priorities, we have to ensure we state our priorities and ensure our resources flow in that direction. Metrics include inputs and outputs. Our inputs are our resources: monetary, in-kind giving, employee expertise and volunteerism, board service, and volunteer leadership. We track that information to make sure our resource allocations match our global commitments. The output is the result of those programs and the benefit to our communities.

You are known within Atlanta as being one of the best corporate citizens. How important is that?

We have a focus on Atlanta because it is our hometown city. Our corporate leadership has always been engaged in the leadership of this city. We believe when the business community joins together with nonprofit organizations, non-governmental organizations, government, and educational institutions, then we have a good community. Earlier this year, we announced a \$2 million grant in support of the city's BeltLine project, the most wide-ranging urban redevelopment effort underway in the U.S. The grant supports pedestrian trails and provides venues for walking, running, and cycling. Another example is Pemberton Place, which is a 20-acre complex in downtown Atlanta. Pemberton Place was named for Dr. John S. Pemberton, the pharmacist who invented Coca-Cola in Atlanta in 1886. We contributed the land to be used for the highest and best use of the city. It is now home to the Georgia Aquarium and the new World of Coca-Cola, five acres of green space, and the potential site for a center for civil and human rights. ●

Dr. John S. Pemberton, inventor of Coca-Cola, enjoys a refreshing glass of his own beverage on the grounds of the new World of Coca-Cola.