

# Direct Selling News®

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## Celebrating Thirty-One Gifts and Thirty-One Gives

by **Kassandra Hayes**



Senior Thirty-One leaders partnered with the Salvation Army to give back to the Franklin Women's Shelter in Bronx, N.Y. They prepared dinner, helped with resume writing and organized the common areas with \$100,000 worth of Thirty-One products to make the shelter feel more like home.

It all started in the basement of Cindy Monroe's Tennessee home in 2003. Equipped with a sewing machine, vision and tremendous faith, Monroe sought to fill a gap for special gifts. "I was working full time and I began to notice that all of the downtown boutiques closed at 6 p.m. There was no place to get those fashionable and personalized gift items. I wanted to create a faith-based company that could empower women. I wanted to help women stay organized and get through a busy day with edgy, fun fashion at affordable prices," says Monroe, CEO and Founder of Thirty-One Gifts. The direct selling company is named after Proverbs 31 to celebrate, encourage and reward the virtuous woman described in that chapter of the Bible.

### Company Profile

**Launched:** 2003

**Headquarters:** Columbus, Ohio

**Founder and CEO:** Cindy Monroe

**Products:** Fun, affordable and functional products such as personalized totes, bags, thermals and organizational items.

**Websites:** [Thirtyonegifts.com](http://Thirtyonegifts.com)  
[Thirtyonegives.org](http://Thirtyonegives.org)



**M**onroe has accomplished the astonishing by taking the business she started in her basement to a company heading towards a billion dollars in revenue in less than 10 years. Part of the company's success and growth through the recession is credited to its high-quality, attractive and affordable products. The average item sells for \$20.

Thirty-One Gifts has grown to more than 100,000 independent consultants nationwide, becoming one of America's fastest-growing direct selling companies. The company was reaching \$700 million in 2011, a goal that may have been attained had it not instituted a four-month waitlist for new consultants. With more than 5,000 new consultants joining the company each month, Thirty-One Gifts implemented a recruitment freeze in an effort to better support and train new consultants.

Waitlisting can be a complicated decision for direct sales companies, as executives worry that turning away new recruits can dampen a company's momentum, and possibly dry up the pool of interested people. But Monroe's commitment to giving each consultant the tools she needed to be successful was the driving force behind the waitlist decision. She credits the communication the company has developed with their field for making this decision work. "We have an open and honest dialogue with our field," Monroe says. "We don't want our consultants caught by surprise. We have conversations with our consultants weekly and monthly, because our relationships with our consultants are a high priority. They trust us and we rely on their feedback to help us."

While the waitlist slowed the momentum for a season, it did not stop the company's overall growth. When Thirty-One lifted the waitlist, 35,000 consultants joined the company. According to Monroe, Thirty-One was able to provide great support from the home office to help them get their business going, due to the efforts that took priority during the waiting period.

Based in Central Ohio, Thirty-One Gifts has grown to a family of more than 2,000 employees who are passionate about their mission and purpose. A call center and capabilities in information technology,

operations and finance were developed to strengthen the foundation of the company. Monroe credits many of these changes for building a stronger sales team. In 2012, 50 percent of local consultants attended sales meetings led by a director on a regular basis. In July 2013, Thirty-One Gifts will host its annual national conference in Atlanta, with thousands of consultants expected to attend. "We are people who believe in celebrating, encouraging and rewarding others for who they are. Through God's strength, we've built a family of individuals who

feel women deserve to treat themselves and those around them to something special. Our commitment is to provide women with a fulfilling, enjoyable and rewarding experience, one person at a time," Monroe says.

What's in store for Thirty-One Gifts in the future? Monroe is as cautious about international expansion as she was about domestic growth though the company has begun a pilot program in Canada. Thirty-One's U.S. leaders already have thousands of people on their teams, and Monroe wants to keep them focused on developing these teams into strong units before increasing internationally. She says, "I don't want to jump into the international market too soon and distract from the wonderful relationship-building taking place in the domestic markets. In five years, I see us building a larger international business."

### Thirty-One Gives Celebrates One-Year Anniversary

It's no coincidence that February is National Self-Awareness Month and the month that the company's charitable initiative, Thirty-One Gives, officially came into being, though Monroe admits it was later than she wanted. With common Monroe commitment, she says, "We don't want to do something just to do it. We want to get it right and do it the Thirty-One way."

Thirty-One Gives, led by Director of Philanthropy and Events Wendy Bradshaw, focuses on giving women and girls the tools they need to reach their full potential. One way the company accomplishes this goal is with "cause products." For example, the U R U Collection was designed to send a positive self-esteem message whenever the bag is opened. Inside each tote, all around the lining are the words: *U R Bold*,

**"We are people who believe in celebrating, encouraging and rewarding others for who they are."**

—Cindy Monroe, Founder and CEO



Thirty-One leaders (left to right) Lorna B., Julie T. and Lindsay K. provide holiday cheer during their *TODAY* Show Toy Drive delivery in Illinois.

UR Strong, UR True, UR U. Bradshaw says, “It’s a burst of confidence every time you use it.”

For each UR U product purchased, 31 cents is donated to a nonprofit organization whose mission is to contribute to the empowerment of women and girls and strengthen families. The UR U Collection has already raised over \$212,000 for various organizations. Monroe says, “I am most proud of the fact that our consultants are involved. This is who we are. It’s not Cindy, it’s not Wendy; it’s our entire salesforce.”

Monroe’s desire for the Thirty-One Gives initiative is to “give back and pay forward” the many blessings they have received as a company. A Thirty-One Gives Care Council was established to enable regional reps and leaders in the field to provide support and feedback.

### Partnership with Girl Talk

There is more to Thirty-One than making stylish handbags and functional products. It is a company dedicated to generosity in communities both at the local and national level, because giving has always been the guiding force of the organization. Bradshaw says, “We spent a year focusing on three pillars that define who we are: Girls, Women and Family. We started with the first pillar, girls, and chose an organization that aligns with who we are. The partnership represents a marriage to us; our hope is that when you think of Thirty-One Gives you think of Girl Talk as well.”

Founded in 2002 by Haley Kilpatrick, Girl Talk is a student-to-student mentoring program that pairs middle school girls with high school girls who serve as mentors. These mentoring sessions build self-esteem and teach the importance of community service, and each student benefits from a valuable mentor relationship. Kilpatrick relates that her middle school years were really tough. As she moved from an inner-city elementary school to a private middle school, she was made fun of and not included in weekend social activities. Kilpatrick says, “When my younger sister entered sixth grade, I told my mom I didn’t want my sister to go through what I went through. My mom said “Then do something about it.”

Ten years ago, at the age of 15, Kilpatrick decided to make a difference. As a sophomore in high school, she held her first meeting with middle school students. She adds, “I thought I would get five or six girls to attend, but 80 percent of the girls in the middle school showed up, and we had to move our meeting from a classroom to the library!” Today Girl Talk is based in Atlanta, with chapters in 44 states and seven countries. Girl Talk has reached more than 35,000 girls worldwide. “I have found so much purpose from my small pain. This work has truly allowed me to experience God’s love. I am so grateful to Wendy and her team and this partnership. The possibilities are endless,” Kilpatrick says.

Bradshaw says that sadly, statistics indicate that a girl’s self-esteem peaks at age 9. The following years through middle school and high school play havoc with her self-image. “We are encouraged about the opportunity to empower girls,” she says. “We are so blessed to be in a position to advocate and create a voice for them.”

Over the next five years, the goal is to reach 100,000 middle school girls and engage in 1 million hours of community service. Rebecca C., Thirty-One Gifts Senior Executive Director, says, “I am so excited by this new partnership. The opportunity we have to impact girls across America is incredible. I can’t wait to watch it unfold and see our consultants jump in and wrap our arms around this work. I have loved seeing women inspired to leverage their businesses for good.”

## Mission of Thirty-One Gives

### “We believe in Her—women and girls.

We embrace Her inner beauty and celebrate Her natural gifts. It’s our mission to celebrate and empower Her, helping to strengthen Her belief in herself, strengthen Her family, and to lead a purposeful, thriving life. We do this through Home Office partnerships, Consultant giving, product donations and exclusive Gives products. We believe that by empowering Her, we strengthen families and communities and change lives.”

## Did you know?

### Important Statistics from Thirty-One Gives:

- » **1 in 4 women** will experience domestic violence.
- » **7 in 10 girls** believe they are not good enough.
- » **62 percent of girls** are insecure about themselves.
- » **A girl’s self-esteem** peaks at age 9.
- » **Only 2 percent of women** describe themselves as beautiful.

Source: [thirtyonegives.org](http://thirtyonegives.org)



Thirty-One Gives, led by Director of Philanthropy and Events Wendy Bradshaw, focuses on giving women and girls the tools they need to reach their full potential.

Over the next five years, Bradshaw anticipates more than 3,000 Thirty-One consultants will get involved and develop mentoring relationships annually between Girl Talk graduates and Thirty-One consultants. “We are most excited about this, because it means the high school girls who lead Girl Talk chapters will have built a solid relationship with a Thirty-One leader as they transition from high school and approach the tough questions raised from being in college,” Bradshaw says.

Kilpatrick is determined to “plant the seeds” while these girls are young to show that self-esteem matters and that they can take action to help others. She says, “I want them to know that they can change the cycle as they one day become women raising daughters of their own.”

By midyear, Thirty-One Gives plans to announce two additional partnerships that support women and families.

### Continuing Partnership with *TODAY Show Toy Drive*

Through another Thirty-One Gives initiative, the company donated \$5.4 million of retail product during the 2012 *TODAY Show Toy Drive*. “We are so proud to be part of the DSA and have enjoyed our partnership with DSA and the *TODAY Show Toy Drive* for several years,” Bradshaw says. With last year’s contribution, Thirty-One was honored to learn they provided one of the largest donations in the *TODAY Show Toy Drive*’s history. The generous donation was made possible due to Thirty-One’s GOGO (Give-One-Get-One), consultant-only outlet sale.

Thirty-One matched purchases one to one, up to 250,000 products, and donated wallets, backpacks, thermal totes and similar items. Products were delivered to all 50 states to charities selected by the *TODAY Show Toy Drive*. They went to nonprofit organizations that support children in need as well as women and families. During toy drive initiatives, according to Bradshaw, many of the donations are geared toward younger children. Thirty-One is proud, she says, to donate products that often fill a gap in the “tween” market.

In addition to the product donation, Thirty-One’s independent leaders in the field—in all 50 states—were involved in delivering the products to 74 chosen charities. Thirty-One “ambassadors,” including National Executive Directors and Senior Executive Directors, visited the charities in their communities to personally interact with the children and families receiving the donation.



Thirty-One Gifts employees (left to right) Cathy Fisher and Barb Grossman; CEO and Founder Cindy Monroe; and senior executive directors Lori B., Amy H., Marci S. and Ellen C. celebrate the inaugural American Heart Association heart walk in Columbus, Ohio.

Mary U, Thirty-One Gifts Senior Executive Director, relates her experience. “I had the privilege to go to New York for our Toy Drive and represent our amazing leader Cindy Monroe. We went to a woman’s shelter in Bronx, N.Y., and poured into these ladies either in serving food, organizing rooms with Thirty-One products, or doing a craft. I was partnered up with a lady who at first didn’t really have much to say, and then when asked if she finished school she said yes. I asked what she majored in, and she said interior design. The thought of having her open up and help lead us was all I wanted. It was like the sun was shining through that room at that very moment. This trip was well worth it. I am honored to be part of a company that truly believes in the Christmas spirit *all year round.*”



The U R U Collection is designed to send a positive self-esteem message whenever the bag is opened with the words *U R Bold, U R Strong, U R True, U R U.*

“I want [young girls] to know that they can change the cycle [of low self-esteem] as they one day become women raising daughters of their own.”

—Haley Kilpatrick, Founder, Girl Talk

### Supporting the American Heart Association

Thirty-One Gifts became the first direct selling company to form a national Heart Walk team, in support of the American Heart Association. Through Thirty-One Gives, over 3,800 consultants and employees participated in over 60 Heart Walks across the country and raised over \$190,000 to support the fight against heart disease, the No. 1 killer of women. These efforts will continue in 2013.

Monroe says, “We know that heart disease affects many of our Thirty-One consultants, employees and customers, so we are excited to raise awareness and funds for life-saving research to save the lives of women across the country. Our goal is to empower and inspire women across the country to take charge of their heart health and take a stand against heart disease.”

### Gives Round Up! Raises 260K+

Recently launched last May, the Gives Round Up! program provides Thirty-One Gifts customers with a chance to further the company’s mission. Thirty-One Gifts customers have the option on their order form to donate extra change by rounding up their purchase to the nearest dollar. Through programs like this a little change adds up to make a huge difference in the lives of women and girls across the country.

Rebecca C. says she enjoys not only helping women and families but also the personal commitment that the programs instill in consultants. “By getting involved in charity organizations, I open my heart and my life to be broken by the needs and pain of others. That is why I feel so strongly about the women of my team not only getting involved with Gives by rounding up the change and promoting U R U items, but also by finding ways to give of their time and talents. This really captures the heart of our consultants, and it is when they find something to invest and believe in that our company becomes bigger than a bag to them.” *DSN*