

Experience of sponsoring a balloon far outweighs the cost... Fun, great relationships keep Communications Installation Services coming back



CIS President Phil Holland, left, and pilot Dave Lynch celebrate Lynch's 2005 win in the Wells Fargo Hare & Hound Competition. Photo: Courtesy of CIS.



Becoming a Major and Corporate sponsor for the Balloon Race isn't as costly or difficult as some might think. Just ask the folks at Communications Installation Services (CIS), a voice and data cabling contractor, who are doing just that for

the fourth year. Phil Holland, president and owner, has been the driving force behind CIS' involvement with the Race. Holland encourages his company's retailers and suppliers to help sponsor a balloon, and in doing so, companies can see that you don't have to foot the bill alone.

"One of the things that's strong with Phil is that he wants people to know that they can do that sort of thing ... if you think it's too much money, you can go in with other people to coop the sponsorship," Laura Clift, CIS' CFO and accounting manager, said of her boss.

The benefits of this type of partnership are varied. It promotes the Race, builds relationships with CIS vendors and it gives folks a taste of the event that they might not have otherwise. Clift



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Photo: Courtesy of CIS

mentions how people react when they come to the CIS tent and get to watch the event from the comfortable surroundings and enjoy the breakfast CIS has catered.

"It takes it (the Race experience) to a whole other level for folks who come to visit," Clift said with a laugh.

CIS has been in business about 22 years, and in Reno for the last 10. Holland has been here forever, which in part explains his love of the Balloon

Race. It's a love he's been happy to share with his employees, and it's something they obviously cherish as well.

Clift explained: "Every year, about this time, we get asked 'are you doing the Race, can we come?'"

"We make it a company event. We give balloon rides to employees and family members. We do a shirt every year, too, and it stays in their wardrobes all year long. They wear it on jobsites ... it promotes the event all year long. Hopefully other companies see that and are encouraged to do the same," she said.

While promoting the Race is clearly important to the folks at CIS, they also enjoy the relationships they've built as Major and Corporate sponsors.

"The pilots become like family; it's just great to see them every year. Everyone at Olsen & Associates, and the Aeronauts, too. It's just great to come back and see them," Clift said.

This year, CIS will sponsor two balloons; WishingStar, flown by Dave and Kim Lynch from Temecula, Calif., and Patriot, Gary Peterson out of Gardnerville. In the past they've had as many as three balloons and have no plans to stop its support anytime soon.

"We plan to do this indefinitely. We get that expectation from the employees and the customers. The best thing is the kids when they come out. They just love it. They are just blown away by the balloons. We had a guy come visit, he was an elderly man and we put him on the balloon. When it was over, all he could say was it was the best experience of his life," Clift said.

Great relationships, amazing experiences and enough fun to fill a hot-air balloon. It's reasons like these that keep great sponsors like CIS coming back to The Great Reno Balloon Race year after year. ●