

Four Peaks Brewing: All for Teachers

Local brewing company

by Tyler Butler

► Four Peaks Brewing Company has a storied past in Arizona. The founders have a track record of both honoring history and innovating for the future all at once. This began with their first location in Tempe, a mission revival-style brick factory, which is still standing strong after more than 100 years and continues today with their inspiring community outreach efforts.

Having their start funded from the resale of large vessels perfect for serving beer, otherwise known as Grundy tanks, the founders of Four Peaks are accustomed to finding solutions to everyday problems. Nearly three years after the idea for Four Peaks was hatched, they finally opened the brewery. Now, two decades later, they've maintained that neighborhood pub mentality while proposing and eventually partnering up with Anheuser-Busch to share their unique brews beyond Arizona and into the world.

This success is thanks in large part to their flagship beer, Kilt Lifter. Having won multiple medals at the Great American Beer Festival and World Beer Cup for this brew, Kilt Lifter has been the cornerstone of their business. Kilt Lifter's popularity has not only served as 60% of Four Peaks' overall brew and the No. 1 locally made beer in Arizona, but it has facilitated the overwhelming success of their 2020 Four Peaks for Teachers campaign.

This initiative started one day as Jim Scussel, Four Peaks Brewing Company co-founder, overheard a few regulars who happened to be teachers venting about how much money they spend on school supplies each year. Scussel recognized the plight these educators were experiencing and created the Four Peaks for Teachers program in 2011.

In the program's first year, the Four Peaks team engaged the brewpub's customers to donate school supplies directly to the brewery. The bartenders and servers boxed everything up and handed out school supply kits to 350 teachers that first year. The program has grown every year since. Now in its tenth year, the initiative was specifically created to help reduce the financial burden on teachers in the Southwest, many of whom spend hundreds of dollars on school supplies each year without reimbursement.

In fact, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, 94% of teachers spend their own money to stock their classrooms with the necessary supplies and resources.



On average, a teacher will put forth nearly \$500 annually, although many were found to spend nearly double that amount. This need is something that has not only become apparent but has reached a critical tipping point as schools struggle to even open for in-person learning.

Four Peaks for Teachers now raises funds through both direct donations and Four Peaks' beer sales. The current program takes these financial donations, then purchases the supplies teachers most need — from scissors and staplers to pencils and paper. Four Peaks employees take these items and create kits to hand out for free in multiple cities and states. This year, the brewery's goal is to distribute 10,000 kits to teachers in Arizona, New Mexico and Nevada.

In order to accomplish this lofty goal, Four Peaks got started back in July. The company began setting aside a portion of sales for its popular Scottish ale, Kilt Lifter. In September, these funds were used to purchase, fill and distribute kits of school supplies to 10,000 teachers. As more Kilt Lifter was sold and more direct donations made, the volume of supplies that was able to be included in each kit also expanded. The program has continued to grow every year. Four Peaks has scaled these efforts by adding more kit pick-up locations. Teachers from New Mexico, Nevada and Arizona had the chance to pick up these precious kits in 2020.

Jess Neill, a teacher and instructional coach for the Laveen Elementary School District, has participated in Four Peaks for Teachers since the program's inception nine years ago. "Part of why Four Peaks for Teachers is so great," she says, "is because the kits that are donated come with those things young teachers assume they're automatically given. And the costs of those items add up." Neill says she spent \$1,000 on supplies during a nine-month period early in her teaching career, and, though the school district she's in currently is much better about providing equipment for teachers, she still spends hundreds of dollars a year on extra supplies for her students.

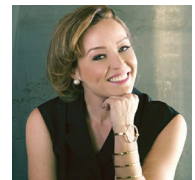
"In an ideal world, we wouldn't need Four Peaks for Teachers," says Neill. "But it's good to know we have it." Thanks to Four Peaks Brewing Company's consistent innovation and solution-oriented leadership style, the educators in the markets where they operate will have an additional boost in their classrooms in a time when everyone could use a lift in their spirits. ■

Four Peaks Brewing Company fourpeaks.com

Four Peaks for Teachers fourpeaksforteachers.org



Four Peaks for Teachers program now raises funds through both direct donations and Four Peaks' beer sales. Customers located outside Four Peaks Brewing Company's distribution footprint can also make a direct, tax-deductible donation to the program and teachers interested in reserving a free school supply kit can do so at fourpeaksforteachers.org.



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