

# Buy a Schonstedt, Save a Life

Schonstedt Instrument Company takes an active role in promoting social responsibility by donating one magnetic locator to the United Nations Mine Action Team for every Tracemaster II or XTpc commercial cable/utilities locator Schonstedt sells. In creating and implementing this initiative, the company helps countries lacking extensive resources increase their demining capabilities.

by Stephen Powers [ Mine Action Information Center ]

Mine-action efforts often include more than actual clearing or support. The time spent on the ground often rivals time spent lobbying for money and increased awareness. During times like these, many in the mine-action community wish that both government and private businesses had a stronger sense of social responsibility. Recently one small business, Schonstedt Instrument Company, Inc., began a program to use its expertise to make a difference in the mine-action community.

## Buy a Schonstedt, Save a life.



in cooperation with the  
United Nations Mine Action Service

Schonstedt donates one magnetic locator for every commercial cable/utilities locator it sells.  
GRAPHIC COURTESY OF SCHONSTEDT INSTRUMENT COMPANY, INC.

### The Schonstedt Initiative

Schonstedt, a world leader in magnetic locators, recently partnered with the United Nations Mine Action Service to create the “Schonstedt Humanitarian Demining Initiative.” Through this initiative, Schonstedt donates one magnetic locator to the United Nations Mine Action Team for every Tracemaster II or XTpc commercial cable/utilities locator, another product it manufactures, sold. This pairing is a bit unusual, as the companies, municipalities and organizations that buy Schonstedt cable locators are not generally connected with mine action; in fact, the purchasing agents at these companies often know very little about the need for demining in the world.

They are pleased, nevertheless, to have a magnetic locator donated in their name to UNMAS for distribution where needed. “It has yet to increase our pipe and cable business *per se*,” says Bob Ebberson, Director of Business Development for Schonstedt, “but it has increased our company loyalty. Our customers now say they will come to us without ques-

tion whenever they need magnetic locators, or if they should need a pipe and cable locator, because they want to support our initiative. It has created a lot of good will.”<sup>1</sup>

Magnetic locators donated through this program offer a substantial resource for countries struggling with explosive remnants of war. Schonstedt has sold magnetic locators to a large variety of humanitarian and military organizations around the world. This initiative merely expands what they were doing commercially. Now countries that cannot afford these tools can add them to their demining toolbox.

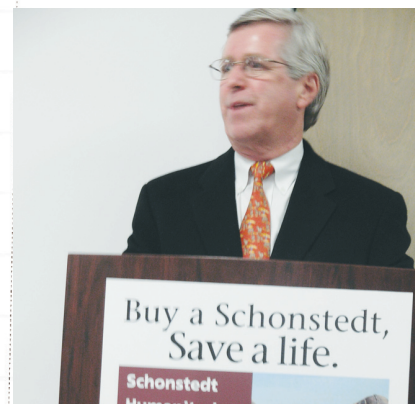
Inspired by stories of corporate social responsibility, Schonstedt decided to leverage its market position by launching its own program. Schonstedt’s initiative revolved around four main goals. First and most importantly, the initiative must accomplish a meaningful goal. Second, the initiative should be sustainable and not a one-time donation. Third, the initiative should help Schonstedt achieve a higher profile for its new cable/utility product line. Finally, it should increase sales of the new product line.<sup>1</sup>

To accomplish these goals Schonstedt looked toward its own strengths. The company had already made and sold some of the highest-quality magnetic locators proven in the field by humanitarian and military organizations. Relying on one of its existing strengths to promote its new line of locators seemed natural. Once Schonstedt management realized they could donate a magnetic locator with the purchase of one of the cable/utility locators, they found their solution. This approach allowed Schonstedt to continue to operate as a for-profit business while doing good and enhancing its public image.

### Schonstedt Partners with UNMAS

To move forward with its initiative, Schonstedt needed a partner that was well-connected in the mine-action field. It found this partner in the United Nations Mine Action Service. After a brief review period, UNMAS eagerly embraced Schonstedt’s new initiative. The partnership has allowed Schonstedt to offer its locators to some of the neediest countries and avoid being mired down in the selection process. So far, Kenya, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Somalia and Tajikistan have all received locators since Schonstedt began its initiative in January 2007.<sup>1</sup> This program is ongoing, and between January and October 2007, a total of 50 locators were donated through Schonstedt’s initiative.<sup>1</sup> By partnering with UNMAS, Schonstedt was ensured donated locators would reach the areas that needed them the most. Schonstedt has recently made a commitment of 24 additional units to Vietnam.<sup>4</sup>

Schonstedt’s partnership with the United Nations Mine Action Service has provided an ideal relationship for both



Bob Ebberson, Director of Business Development for Schonstedt, announces the distribution of 15 additional locators to Lao PDR at Schonstedt’s headquarters in Kearneysville, West Virginia.  
PHOTO COURTESY OF LOIS CARTER FAY.

parties. Justin Brady is a Planning Officer for UNMAS and has worked closely with Schonstedt. Brady described an example of the importance of having magnetic locators available: “In the Rasht Valley,<sup>2</sup> cluster bomblets are scattered among rocks in gullies and are difficult to detect. In one gully where 10 had been found through visual search, an additional 17 were discovered once they had the locators.”<sup>3</sup>

In many of the poor, rural areas, mine-action efforts lack sophisticated equipment. Often demining efforts rely on dangerous manual demining tactics. Schonstedt’s initiative targets these types of areas and provides the equipment critical to safely and effectively demine an area.

These handheld magnetic locators, which are designed to find ferrous metal only (ignoring most of the metal debris that metal detectors find), significantly help with finding unexploded cluster munitions and other bomblets. The magnetic locator can find ferrous metal that is deeply buried, entwined in underbrush, or lodged in trees. Agricultural lands that have lain fallow for years due to unexploded ordnance can be cleared with the help of these magnetic locators.

Thanks to Schonstedt’s efforts, many needed magnetic locators have found their way to deprived regions around the world. These locators dramatically help Mine Action Teams in these areas improve the demining process. Training and equipment remain key factors for sustainable mine-action efforts. Schonstedt opted to fill this critical role by supplying needed equipment, demonstrating an awareness and a concern that many in the mine-action community wish other companies would follow. Schonstedt sees its initiative both as an ethical and a profitable one. The campaign has helped Schonstedt build brand loyalty with the added benefit of being (and being seen as) a responsible business.

An ancillary benefit of Schonstedt’s approach does not go unnoticed at UNMAS. Brady says, “A nice aspect of the initiative is that the companies, municipalities and individuals who make the donation of each detector ... receive a letter of thanks from UNMAS.”<sup>3</sup> And they also receive a similar letter from the U.S. Department of State thanking them for their participation, according to Daniel E. Hutchens, Program Officer in the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement. Schonstedt Instrument Company’s initiative not only helps mine-action efforts by donating locators to needy countries but also by increasing awareness. Raising the profile of its new product line relies largely on the advertising of its humanitarian-demining initiative. UNMAS has seen this as an opportunity to further increase mine-action awareness of the population at large.

“We are starting to get inquiries about buying and donating the magnetic locators directly,” says Ebberson. So far, The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) have purchased and donated units, and Rotary International and the student chapter of the American Congress on Surveying and Mapping at California State University, Fresno are also pursuing this option. Schonstedt sells the locators at list price and matches donations unit for unit. The Quakers will also be presenting Schonstedt with US\$10,000 in contributions acquired as a result of an article that ran in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* discussing previous Quaker contributions to Schonstedt and the Quakers’ unrelenting desire to help others in the world.<sup>4,5</sup>

Schonstedt advertises “Buy a Schonstedt, Save a Life” on the company’s Web site and in other advertising. This simple message reaches a community that would not normally be exposed to mine action. Now utilities contractors learn about mine action when they buy equipment from Schonstedt through this simple offer: Purchase one of Schonstedt’s products and you will get more than just a good locator. It’s a rather persuasive pitch, considering the added benefit comes at no extra cost to the purchaser.

Perhaps the most lasting impression Schonstedt’s initiative leaves is one of compassion. A relatively small company in West Virginia, with just 32 employees (who are also its owners), Schonstedt decided it could help make a difference in the world and set out to do just that. Using the skills that had made it successful, company management decided to donate a product they knew would be helpful to the mine-action community. Their effort came at a relatively low cost—these magnetic locators sell for about US\$1,000 each.

Demonstrating that practicing social responsibility can profit both the greater good and the company, Schonstedt remains an industry leader. Schonstedt has positioned itself as both a leading provider of magnetic locators and a leader in social responsibility—a position that should make both its employee-owners and the mine-action community equally happy. Thanks to the efforts of the Schonstedt Instrument Company and UNMAS, countries all over the world have the opportunity to benefit when Schonstedt’s utility and pipe customers “Buy a Schonstedt and Save a Life.” ♦

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