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Nonprofit Strategies



SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Donors Follow Example Of Nonprofit's Board

By Barry VanderKelen

I've spoken with a number of nonprofits lately about their financial struggles. I am not surprised that organizations are not able to balance income with need. The economic recession causes needs to increase and giving to decrease. Now is the time to focus on basic principles in order to stabilize a donor base and start to enlarge it.

The place to begin is the board of directors. Is every member of the board financially supporting the organization? A primary purpose of the board is to ensure the organization has the resources it needs to do its work. Board members must both give money and solicit money from other sources.

Donors want to know if those closest to the organization have given already. It's important to be able to say that the entire board has given. The amount the person gives is less important than the fact the person gives, although some organizations have a minimum expectation for the amount of money board members give or get.

A question every board member must ask, and answer honestly, is: Do I support my organization? Why should someone marginally involved in the organization financially support it if those responsible for it don't? One of the most influential things a board member can say to a prospective donor is, "Please join me in supporting this important cause."

Donors are fatigued right now. Many people stretched to donate in December because they saw so many neighbors in need. News of economic recovery is confusing when personal circumstances are not improving. Donors are making difficult decisions about which organizations to support.

A sign of the times is that board members are fatigued, too. Keeping organizations going these past two years has been exhausting. But now more than ever board members must set a positive example.

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Resource Use

- Support nonprofit leadership
- Board development/training
- Strategic planning

Nonprofit Business Column of The Tribune

The San Luis Obispo Tribune publishes a column every other week in the Business section dedicated to the business practices of nonprofit orgs. Barry VanderKelen, Executive Director of the San Luis Obispo County Community Foundation writes the bi-

weekly column to help strengthen nonprofit organizations in the community. Each column is reprinted here as a one-page handout for use by local organizations. Barry can be reached at 543-2323 or by e-mail at barry@slocf.org.