

Volume 3, Issue 23

Originally Published
December 3, 2009

Nonprofit Strategies



SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

A Time Of Year For Reflection, Gratitude

By Barry VanderKelen

In light of Thanksgiving and the arrival of the holidays, I found myself reflecting on things I'm grateful for:

- A recovering economy. The signals are mixed; the stock markets are soaring, but so is unemployment. Economists are measuring growth again, which gives me hope for the future.
- Persistency. The economy started softening in 2007, and eroding in 2008. The first quarter of 2009 was extremely stressful; stock markets continued falling until mid-March. This has been a difficult period. Nonprofit leaders have had to be dogged and tenacious.
- Resolve. Early indicators suggest that the state budget will be even worse off in 2010. The current projections show a gap of more than \$20 billion. Another round of cuts may be coming in January. Nonprofits, especially those that provide for the basic needs of our neighbors, must be resolute in mission in order to get through this next year.
- Others. Albert Schweitzer said, "at times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us."
- Learning to be grateful. Gratitude can be learned, and it will fade without cultivation. A staple of life coaches is focusing on cultivating gratitude in their clients. Researchers Robert Emmons and Michael McCullough find that daily attempts to think or write about something with gratitude fosters optimism. They find that grateful people help other people more frequently, are more satisfied with their lives, are better able to empathize with others, and place less importance on material possessions.
- Elders. We are fortunate to have in our community more experienced people who are willing to share their wisdom with younger colleagues. In effect, the elders lift up the next generation, thus helping ensure continuity in purpose and pursuit.
- Volunteers. Imagine how frayed our community would be without people who give of their time and talents. These people personify the missions of the organizations they represent. A popular question at local cocktail parties is, "What organizations are you involved with?"
- Nonprofit employees. Economic studies tend to value an hour of volunteer time more highly than an hour of paid time. People who work for nonprofits sacrifice income and benefits in order to work in support of a cause or mission. These people are talented and committed, and one can't help but be energized by them.
- Donors. People don't have to donate money, especially during these challenging economic times. But they do because they care about the missions of the organizations they support. What a powerful statement the person makes when making a donation.
- Our country. The freedoms we enjoy, especially the right to associate with people we choose, is unimaginable in other countries. Our laws permit us to band together to address a need we see in the community, and give incentives to others to financially support our work..

Barry VanderKelen is executive director of the San Luis Obispo County Community Foundation. He can be reached at barry@slocf.org.

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.