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# Nonprofit Strategies



SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

## How the county ranks in nonprofits

**By Barry VanderKelen**

Does San Luis Obispo County have the most nonprofit organizations per person of any county in the country?

A visitor asked me this recently. He had heard this claim from a local resident earlier in the day. I had heard from various people over the last few years that the county had the highest ratio of nonprofit organizations to individuals in the state, but that the claim had escalated to the highest in the nation made me wonder. Is it true?

By comparing the population of each county to the number of nonprofit organizations in each county, I found that the claim is not correct, no matter how you parse the data.

The most recent population estimate for each county that I can

find is from January 2009 from the state of California.

The National Center for Charitable Statistics has an updated count of nonprofit organizations by county as of January 2010.

Here are some of the findings when comparing the two:

- San Luis Obispo County has the 24th largest population of the 58 counties in the state.
- The county is home to the 24th most nonprofit organizations of all classifications, including charities, service clubs, business associations, etc.
- Looking only at traditional charities— tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code — the county ranks 22nd.
- Calculating the number of nonprofit organizations per person, our county ranks 24th.

- For 501(c)(3) organizations, we rank 19th, immediately behind Santa Cruz County and ahead of Santa Barbara County.

Another interesting finding is that our county has a relatively low number of small charities; we rank 45th for the number of 501(c)(3) organizations that have an annual revenue of less than \$25,000.

These statistics may put to rest the myth about the relatively high concentration of nonprofit organizations in our county. Using accurate numbers helps keep the important work of nonprofit organizations in perspective.

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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](mailto:barry@slocf.org).