



Program offers nonprofit groups ways to maximize their resources

By Barry VanderKelen

Today, I highlight the development officer certificate program offered by the Nonprofit Support Center and Cal Poly's Continuing Education and University Outreach. This program is an example of nonprofit groups leveraging their resources to create stronger programs, advance their missions and meet local needs.

The need for this program is clear. Most people get involved in a nonprofit group because of the cause, such as improving health care or protecting the environment. Few people get involved because they like to raise money. Even fewer have ever received any training on how to fundraise. As a result, many nonprofit groups dread the development process and rely too heavily on special events.

Enter the convergence of mission and resources that led to the development officer certificate program. The Nonprofit Support Center offers courses and programs that help nonprofit groups do their work better, including raising money more effectively.

About a year ago, Cal Poly received a grant from the National Council on Aging to train people 55 and older to serve as volunteer development officers for

nonprofit groups.

Rather than create competing programs, the center and Cal Poly agreed to share expertise and other resources in order to create a stronger training program for everyone.

The program consists of three full-day sessions in September and October. Topics include donor cultivation, annual and capital campaigns, grant writing and planned giving. Cal Poly, the Nonprofit Support Center and local experts collaborate to develop the content of each session.

"The program covers critical components of development with emphasis on creating a development plan and encouraging diverse funding streams," said Maria Fabula, regional manager of the center. "The goal is to help nonprofits become more sustainable." Fabula points out that the three-day format allows only for a comprehensive introduction to each topic. However, so few nonprofit board and staff members have had any training that an introductory course is an important step.

Cal Poly sought the National Council on Aging grant because of the growing number of elderly and retired people in San Luis Obispo County. Offering such training helps people apply skills

learned during for-profit careers to local nonprofit groups. Collaborating with the center allows Cal Poly to offer this program at a lower cost and reach more people.

Based in Santa Barbara, the Nonprofit Support Center recently opened an office in San Luis Obispo to meet the training needs of nonprofit groups in the county. Collaborating with another organization allows the center to offer more programs.

Working together, the two organizations have created a stronger training program. By reaching out to both organizations' constituencies, the number of participants in the first class exceeded enrollment goals.

Donors are becoming more sophisticated about their giving. The development officer certificate program is one way for nonprofit groups to keep pace with changing donor expectations.

Cal Poly is offering scholarships to prospective participants, and the center is offering discounts for members.

Information about the program and scholarships is available at

www.supportcenter.org. Enrollment for the next session closes Sept. 5.

Barry VanderKelen is executive director of the San Luis Obispo County Community Foundation.

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-

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