



THE VANNO VOICE

July 2006

Greetings!

We are pleased to bring you the July edition of the VANNO Voice -- your link to news and resources for Virginia's nonprofit sector! We encourage you to forward this valuable information to your colleagues, both inside your organization and throughout your community.

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Virginia Delegates Chosen for Nonprofit Congress

Approximately 500 nonprofit delegates and 200 at-large participants from across the country will gather in the nation's capital for the Nonprofit Congress National Meeting on October 16 – 17, 2006. Based on an open application process, 10 individuals were selected to represent each state as voting delegates at the fall event. Virginia's delegates are:

- Karen Michalski-Karney, Blue Ridge Ind. Living Center, Roanoke
- Kristen Paynter, Activate Richmond, Richmond
- Jerry Pharr, Earth Force, Alexandria
- Karen Smith, ARC of Prince William, Prince William
- Nermian Riad, Coptic Orphans, Merrifield
- Linda Jones, CLEAN, Inc, Winchester
- Clare Schapiro, Richmond Public Library Fdn, Richmond
- Nancy Stutts, Connect Network, Richmond
- David Chu, AmeriCorps Member, Arlington

- Christina LaRoche, Camp Holiday Trails, Charlottesville

The Nonprofit Congress is an unprecedented effort to unite nonprofits and strengthen the charitable sector. Nonprofit leaders from every state and subsector are convening at the National Meeting to affirm the values that all nonprofits share and prioritize the issues generated from input gathered at local nonprofit Town Hall meetings being held across the country. The goal of the event is to create a collective action plan for the sector.

In addition to assisting with delegate selection, VANNO will be convening 4-5 Town Hall meetings throughout Virginia in September. These gatherings will collect ideas and opinions from local nonprofits which will be added to the national meeting, and will provide an opportunity for the 10 Virginia delegates to hear directly from their peers.

The Nonprofit Congress is an inclusive event that seeks to mirror the geographic and subsector (arts, education, environment and animals, health, human services, public benefit, religion related, etc.) diversity of the nonprofit sector. Since 90 percent of nonprofits have annual budgets under \$5 million, most participants are expected to represent these groups. Executive directors, staff and board members, volunteers, and students are all encouraged to register at www.nonprofitcongress.org/register.

In addition individuals and organizations can get involved by signing the initiative's Declaration for America's Nonprofits. www.nonprofitcongress.org/declaration.htm

VANNO Guide for Nonprofit Accountability

While there are several high quality tools and resources available to assist nonprofits in building capacity and maintaining public accountability, VANNO has published a new booklet specifically for organizations in Virginia. "From Principle to Practice: A Guide to Accountability for Virginia's Nonprofit Organizations" includes a user-friendly checklist for accountability developed by Independent Sector, an assessment tool to identify which pieces you already have in place, and suggested action steps for creating a culture of accountability in your organization. Use this document to help your staff and board members guarantee your organization's well-being and sustainability. Hard copies are available free of charge by contacting VANNO at 804.794.8689 or info@vanno.org You may also download a PDF version at www.vanno.org/newsreports/index.htm

E-Mail Voting by Boards: What's Legal?

As nonprofits seek both to increase their use of technology and to operate at maximum efficiency, many are wondering how their boards of directors can utilize e-mail voting to make decisions both at and between regular board meetings.

At this time, most states do not allow e-mail voting to constitute action of

a board of directors, since e-mail alone does not give board members the same opportunity to deliberate as a face-to-face meeting does. However, as technology continues to advance, and as the ability to conduct electronic meetings using telephone or videoconference has become a reality, such technologies may be combined with the use of e-mail as a means of voting during a board meeting. Additionally, provisions allowing for a board of directors to take action under certain circumstances without a meeting, may allow for voting by e-mail or other electronic communication in such instances.

In order to understand the constraints surrounding e-mail voting, one must first understand three related aspects of board governance:

- What constitutes a "meeting" of the board
- How voting may occur during a board "meeting," and
- How voting may occur in the absence of a board "meeting."

Each of these is addressed by Virginia law and should also be addressed in the bylaws of every nonprofit organization. In an effort to clarify this issue for Virginia nonprofits, VANNO has prepared an explanation of what current Virginia law allows, and why. Sample bylaw provisions are also provided.

Read the entire article at
www.vanno.org/newsreports/issuespot_06_electronicvoting.htm

Member Spotlight: Volunteer Fairfax

Each month the VANNO website highlights one of our nonprofit member organizations. This month's "spotlight" is Volunteer Fairfax, connecting individuals, youth, seniors, families and corporations to volunteer opportunities at more than 700 organizations in the Fairfax County area. Visit the VANNO website home page at www.vanno.org to read more about their work and recent accomplishments.

NPower Technology Innovation Award

NPower Greater DC Region, a local nonprofit organization that provides technology services to other nonprofits, announced that applications are being accepted for its second annual NPower Technology Innovation Award given by Accenture. This award recognizes those nonprofits in the metropolitan DC region whose innovative use of technology has helped them improve key aspects of their operations and more effectively fulfill their missions. The award will honor a winner and two other finalists that best demonstrate how technology advancements have had a positive impact on 1) their overall mission; 2) the efficiency of day-to-day operations; 3) the effectiveness in serving clients and key stakeholders; and 4) their fundraising, advocacy or volunteer efforts.

Winners will receive free technology consulting and software products valued up to \$35,000. Interested local nonprofits can apply by downloading an application form online at www.npowergdc.org/tia.htm or by contacting NPower Greater DC Region directly at 202.234.9670 to request an

application. The deadline for submitting an application is September 15, with finalists to be announced in October.

Looking for Salary Information?

The Occupational Information Network is an excellent source where you can search for specific types of jobs and find job titles, duties, knowledge and skill requirements, etc. Wage data is provided by low, median and high percentiles, and is broken down by state as well. Available free at online.onetcenter.org

For additional sources of salary information specific to the nonprofit sector, check out the VANNO website at www.vanno.org/infocentral/HT_salary.htm

Free Manual on Starting a Nonprofit

Want to start a nonprofit organization, or operate your organization more effectively? Students in the Law of Nonprofit Organizations class at the University of Richmond recently created a manual on how to start a nonprofit organization which is now available as a free download. It is divided into five chapters, containing useful checklists and sample forms. There is also a very short version of the manual for those who need a quick overview of the significant issues. To access the entire document, visit law.richmond.edu/nonprofit.

Additional resources on this topic can be found on the VANNO website at: www.vanno.org/infocentral/HT_startanonprofit.htm

Volunteerism On the Rise

According to a new report released by the Points of Light Foundation in Washington, volunteering increased among Americans by nearly 12 percent from 2002 to 2005. Other highlights of the study include:

- Interest in volunteering rose more quickly among people age 55 to 64 than it did among people in other age groups.
- Nearly 14 percent more people age 16 to 24 volunteered in 2005, a statistic that could point to a healthy future for volunteering.
- The number of hours Americans spent volunteering also grew, but not as much as the number of volunteers.

According to a separate study by Deloitte and Touche USA and the Points of Light Foundation, most charities are not taking advantage of the professional skills of volunteers.

- Sixty-two percent of charity leaders said they do not rely on any companies to provide volunteers.
- Just 12 percent of nonprofit groups said they regularly give their volunteers the opportunity to work on projects that match their skills.
- Among workers who volunteer, 40 percent said they actively look for

opportunities to use the skills honed in their jobs, but only 19 percent said they rely primarily on those skills when they volunteer.

Reports on these studies are available at www.pointsoflight.org.

Valuing Volunteer Time

As their fiscal year ends many organizations seek to capture the value of what volunteers contribute. Calculating the number of volunteer hours is one approach, but this does not take into account the dollar value of their work nor the more intangible impacts of the time they donate.

There are five different methods for measuring the value of volunteers, each having their advantages and disadvantages:

- Average wage: assigns a dollar amount per volunteer hour, based on the average wage paid to an American worker at a national, state or city level.
- Replacement wage: calculates the value of the volunteer's time based on the amount it would cost the organization to pay someone to complete the same task.
- Opportunity cost: estimates the salary that the individual volunteer makes in his/her professional life; for every hour volunteered, the person is forgoing that hour's worth of income.
- Social benefits: includes both direct and indirect results of the volunteer program, beyond a purely wage-based value.
- Value to volunteer: measures the benefit that the volunteer receives in exchange for their time and efforts.

Whereas the "Average Wage" system is the most commonly used, it doesn't tell the whole story. The inherent value of volunteers is indisputable, and worth articulating in the most meaningful way for your organization. For more excellent information about each of these methods, visit the following websites:

www.rgkcenter.org/investigator

www.independentsector.org/programs/research/volunteer_time.html

Resources for Faith-Based Nonprofits

The Faith-Based Capacity Builders Affinity Group is part of the Alliance for Nonprofit Management, a professional membership organization for nonprofit capacity builders in the United States and Canada. The Group aims to provide a forum to unite Alliance members working with faith-based organizations and institutions for the purpose of knowledge and resource sharing, skill development, networking and promoting promising practices within this sector of the nonprofit community.

Visit www.allianceonline.org/faith_based.page to find:

- Descriptions of consultants from 24 states & provinces skilled in

- increasing the effectiveness of faith-based service and activities.
- Services in areas such as program development, fundraising, strategic planning, financial management, advocacy, cultural competency, and many other areas important for faith-based organizations involved in programs and services for communities.
- Links of interest to faith-based service providers, government liaison offices, and grantmakers.

Grant Writing Tips and Tools

Need to polish your grant-writing skills? If you can't attend a workshop or course, here are some excellent places to find the basics:

EPA Grant-Writing Tutorial

www.purdue.edu/dp/envirosoft/grants/src/msieopen.htm

Software program produced by Purdue University under a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Grant Proposal Writing Tips

www.cpb.org/grants/grantwriting.html

Resource published by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting that provides guideposts for the grant-writing process.

Grantwriting Basics

www.gse.harvard.edu/~hgseosr/toolbox.html

Ten tips for writing a successful proposal, along with additional resources for grant writers.

Grant Writing Tips

www.seanet.com/~sylvie/grants.htm

Grant-planning questions, basic elements of good proposals, and links to grant resources from an experienced grant writer.

Grant Writing Tip Sheets

grants.nih.gov/grants/grant_tips.htm

General grant-writing tutorials as well as specific information about applying for National Institutes of Health grants.

Non-profit Guides

www.npguides.org

Grant-writing tools for nonprofits, including tips, sample proposals, and links.

Successful Grant Writing

www.generalcode.com/grants/grant_writing_get_started.html

A grant-writing consultant's outline of the basic steps necessary for planning the grant-writing process.

Writing a Successful Grant Proposal

www.mcf.org/mcf/grant/writing.htm

The Minnesota Council on Foundations' detailed outline of a grant proposal, which is particularly oriented to project proposals.

Source: Suzanne E. Coffman and Lauren Nicole Klapper-Lehman, March 2006 GuideStar newsletter

Good Governance Not So Rare

Foundations and other nonprofit organizations are far more engaged and interested in practicing good governance and ensuring accountability than is being suggested by critics seeking increased federal oversight of these tax-exempt organizations, according to a national study by Johns Hopkins University.

The 21-page report entitled: "Nonprofit Governance and Accountability" reveals that an overwhelming majority of the 247 nonprofits surveyed "are highly or significantly involved in the key strategic oversight functions that nonprofit boards are expected to perform." The study's findings are part of the research being conducted by the Johns Hopkins University Listening Post Project designed to provide accurate information on various policy issues affecting both the nonprofit sector.

According to the survey conducted in the spring of 2005:

- About 90 percent of those nonprofits researched engaged in setting formal ethical standards, including creating policies on conflict of interest, record retention and travel expenses.
- Approximately 97 percent of sampled organizations have undergone an independent audit within the past two years.
- 95 percent regularly distribute financial reports to their boards.
- 81 percent have created compliance programs to ensure regulations are being met.
- Nearly two-thirds of the organizations surveyed already take part in best-practice accreditation programs.
- Of those organizations that do not participate in formal best-practice accreditation programs, most report following an internally developed set of standards.
- Internal factors such as a desire to promote organizational excellence and improve transparency are more important in explaining adherence to best-practice accreditation standards than external pressures from funders, clients or the press.

"These results are yet another example of how foundations and other nonprofits are meeting their ethical and fiduciary responsibilities," says Diana Aviv, president and CEO of Independent Sector, a national coalition of nonprofits, foundations and corporations strengthening nonprofit initiative, philanthropy and citizen action.

"We have always maintained that the vast majority of nonprofits have – and are – doing what is right and ethical and are concerned about meeting the high expectations of government, the media and the public," she adds. "Practicing good governance and promoting accountability are the cornerstones of our work."

To obtain the complete Johns Hopkins University report: "Nonprofit Governance and Accountability" go to www.jhu.edu.

Source: Clifton Gunderson LLP, "Nonprofit Insight" delivers news about issues affecting the nonprofit sector.

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www.VANNO.org