



THE VANNO VOICE

September 2006

Greetings! We are pleased to bring you the September 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. You can also read past issues on the VANNO website at www.vanno.org

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Virginia Town Hall Meetings – See You There!

Are you interested in ... Building your network of nonprofit leaders? ... Giving voice to the issues and constituents you care about? ... Articulating your vision for the nonprofit sector?

If you answered "Yes!", please join us at one of the 7 regional Town Hall meetings being held throughout Virginia during September. Hosted by VANNO and a local nonprofit in each of the cities and towns where the meetings are to be held, these Town Halls are a part of the Nonprofit Congress – an unprecedented national effort to unite nonprofits and strengthen the charitable sector. In October, 500 nonprofit representatives will gather in Washington, DC to affirm their common values, prioritize the issues generated from 100 Town Hall meetings in 42 states, and plan collective action that addresses the sector's greatest challenges. You can add your voice and ideas by participating in one of the following Virginia

Town Halls:

- Valley of Virginia – September 13, 2006 - 10:00am to Noon
Co-host: WVPT & James Madison University Social Work Dept.
Location: WVPT, Harrisonburg, VA - RSVP to: Donna Meyerhoeffer.
540-437-2455, dmeyerhoeffer@wvpt.net
- Hampton Roads Virginia – September 14, 2006 – 10:00am to Noon
Co-host: Volunteer Hampton Roads Location: Volunteer Hampton Roads, Norfolk, VA RSVP to: Kristen Nelson, 757-624-2400; knelson@volunteerhr.org
- Northern Virginia – September 19, 2006 - 10:00am to Noon
Co-host: The Virginia Tech – Northern Virginia Center Location: The Virginia Tech – Northern VA Center, Falls Church, VA RSVP to: Karen Akers, (703) 538-8312, kakers@vt.edu
- Roanoke Region Virginia – September 21, 2006 – 10:00am to Noon
Optional Networking Lunch, Noon to 1:00pm Co-host: Council of Community Services Location: Grandin Road Unitarian Church, Roanoke, VA RSVP to: Linda Arrington, (540) 985-0131, ext 104, LindaA@councilofcommunityservices.org
- Central Virginia – September 25, 2006 – 9:00am to 11:00am
Co-host: Center for Civic Engagement, University of Richmond
Location: Univ. of Richmond, Jepson Alumni Center, Richmond, VA
RSVP to: Gail Oliver, (804) 484-1600; Goliver@richmond.edu
- Eastern Shore of Virginia – September 26, 2006 – 1:00pm to 3:00pm
Co-host: Barrier Islands Center Location: Barrier Islands Center, Machipongo, VA RSVP to: Laura Vaughan, (757) 678-5550, bic@esva.net
- Southwest Virginia – September 28, 2006 – 8:30am to 10:30am
Co-host: Appalachian Center for Community Service Location: Vandyke Center, Emory & Henry College RSVP to: Gloria Surber; (276) 944-6817, gwsurber@ehc.edu

While advance registration is not required, attendees are asked to RSVP to the contacts listed above so the local hosts can plan adequate seating, food and materials.

Can't attend any of the Virginia Town Hall Meetings? Go to the Nonprofit Congress website www.nonprofitcongress.org and add your comments and ideas electronically! And urge your staff, clients and Board members to sign the Declaration for America's Nonprofits in support of the Nonprofit Congress.

Member Spotlight:

This month's featured nonprofit is the Western Virginia EMS Council, Inc. in Roanoke. One of 11 such EMS Councils in Virginia, their goal is to assure a quality emergency medical system throughout a 12-county region through planning, education and evaluation. To read more about their work and recent accomplishments, visit the VANNO website home page at

www.vanno.org

Especially for Nonprofit Organizations Annual Conference

Virginia Commonwealth University is once again sponsoring this popular one-day conference for nonprofit staff and Board members on September 28, 9:00 am to 2:00pm in Richmond. This year's event will focus on "Investing in our Future: How to Become a Succession Organization."

Over the past thirty years, the nonprofit sector has more than doubled in size creating both leadership opportunities and vacuums as board members, CEOs and professional staff move in and on from their leadership posts. Three recent national studies confirm that 50-85% of all nonprofit executives plan to leave their positions during the next five to seven years. This forecast spells unprecedented transition for nonprofit organizations, the individuals involved, and the public sector as a whole.

Dr. Susan Kenny Stevens will speak and facilitate discussion on how a nonprofit can prepare for changes in organizational leadership – both planned and unexpected. This session, delivered in an interactive format, will be especially helpful to CEOs, board members and staff members in supervisory functions.

For more details and registration information go to:

www.vcu.edu/ocp/programs/nonprofitorgs/ or contact Rich Firth at 804-827-0246.

Superior Teleconferencing Option for VANNO Members

VANNO members now have access to an easy and cost effective way to communicate with staff, colleagues, members, volunteers, even carry out board meetings.

VANNO has teamed up with ReadyTalk, a recognized leader in voice and web conferencing, to bring you an easy-to-use solution at unbeatable rates. ReadyTalk's "board member friendly" web and teleconferencing services can enhance all of your organization's meetings. ReadyTalk makes audio and web conferencing simple for everyone, regardless of technical savvy, office location, or computing platform.

VANNO members save up to 70% off the regular price As a member, you can use ReadyTalk's voice conferencing solution for 6 cents per minute per participant, and web conferencing for 10 cents per minute per participant. As the E.D. of one of our members commented recently, "I was thrilled at this opportunity to save money on all our conference calls. This discount is paying for the cost of our VANNO dues in just one month!"

To learn more, visit www.ReadyTalk.com -- and join VANNO to start saving significant money!

New Law: Nonprofit Sales and Use Tax Exemption

Virginia law relating to nonprofit sales and use tax exemption requires a financial audit if the entity's gross annual revenue was \$250,000 or greater in the previous year. Delegate Clarke Hogan from South Boston in Southside Virginia was approached by a Volunteer Rescue Squad whose revenue went a little above the \$250,000 threshold. This nonprofit learned that a "financial audit" would cost them more than \$5,000, thus eliminating the savings from the sales and use tax exemption. Delegate Hogan worked with the Virginia Tax Commissioner and the governor and the following amendment is NOW law for the two years of the 2006-2008 budget.

§3-5.07. SALES AND USE TAX EXEMPTIONS FOR NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Notwithstanding the provisions of §58.1-609.11 C 4, Code of Virginia, in the case of a nonprofit entity seeking to qualify for a sales and use tax exemption pursuant to §58.1-609.11 B, Code of Virginia, the Department of Taxation shall accept a review of the financial statements performed by an independent certified public accountant in lieu of a full audit, if the entity's gross annual revenue was less than \$500,000 in the previous year. Such review is deemed to meet the requirement for a "financial audit" as that term is used and is required in §58.1- 609.11 C 4, Code of Virginia.

Creative Fundraising Ideas Galore!

Looking for unusual, successful special events to raise money? Subscribe to the monthly newsletter, "Special Events Galore!" published by Stevenson, Inc. for just \$79 per year and get more ideas than you can possibly use. More details at www.stevenso.ninc.com

Low Cost, High Quality Computers

Nonprofits throughout the nation can now purchase high-quality refurbished computers at a fraction of the cost of new equipment, thanks to the Recycled Computer Initiative from Tech Soup. For details on this new program, visit http://gaO.org/ct/S1L_q191gXpR/

CEO as Voting Board Member: Yes or No?

While at one time it was considered inappropriate, there is a rising trend among nonprofit boards to give board membership and a vote to the CEO/Executive Director. A recent NCNB/Stanford study shows that 17% of boards include the CEO as a voting member (up from 9% in 1997). Those in favor of this practice assert that it gives CEOs credibility and respect, in particular with for-profit corporations where such arrangements are the standard. They argue that board membership gives CEOs a way to take stands on board matters, and that without a vote CEOs are cast as "second

class" board members. On the other hand, opponents claim that having a vote may give the CEO too much power, and disrupts the accountability of the CEO to the board. In fact, most nonprofit CEOs are not even members of the board.

Betsy Rosenblatt of the National Center for Nonprofit Boards offers her thoughts about this issue in the following article from Board Café:

"The tension that comes from the balance of power between the chief executive and the board is often necessary to keep a nonprofit on the right track. Properly defining the roles and responsibilities of each- and promoting accountability between the two-may be challenging, but it's necessary for a healthy nonprofit.

The board hires, fires, and evaluates the chief executive: in effect, the board as a group is the chief executive's supervisor. The board delegates its authority to the chief executive. For that individual to be voting on the board and influencing decisions about his or her role creates a conflict of interest. If the chief executive were able to sway board decisions by voting, the board's independent role in keeping the chief executive on his or her toes is at risk. The board also sets the chief executive's salary, so it clearly doesn't make sense for the CEO to vote on that decision. Yes, the chief executive could recuse himself or herself from that discussion, but for how many other decisions would recusing be appropriate?

As the top staffperson, the chief executive already wields a great deal of power. He or she likely knows better than anyone what goes on in the organization. The chief executive controls much of the flow of information to the board and, for the most part, controls the hiring and firing of staff. A CEO's fear that without a vote, the board holds all the influence and control, is unfounded. In a healthy board-CEO relationship, the CEO gives reports and makes recommendations. A vote shouldn't try to accomplish what a discussion could.

But what about the argument that board membership and a vote are needed for the CEO to be respected both on the board and with outside constituents? If a vote is necessary for a board to demonstrate its respect for its CEO then something else is wrong with the board-staff relationship-and THAT should be addressed. And although nonprofit corporations must be as efficient and organized as for-profit corporations, nonprofits have different stakeholders, different goals and missions, than for-profit businesses do. They must find ways to demonstrate their efficiency and effectiveness to corporations by ways other than imitating their board practices.

In the organization on whose board I serve, the chief executive relies on the thoughtfulness and perspective of the board to guide the organization. In turn, she carries the confidence and ability to make day-to-day decisions and carry out the mission of the organization. She does her job, and we on the board do ours. It works out."

Source: BOARD CAFÉ, published monthly by CompassPoint Nonprofit Services (formerly the Support Center for Nonprofit Management) and the National Center for Nonprofit Boards. To subscribe to this free e-newsletter, send an e-mail message to boardcafe@compasspoint.org and

in the body of the message type SUBSCRIBE BOARD CAFE.

Planning a Staff or Volunteer Retreat

Retreats are a way to gather your staff, board and/or other participants in a relaxed setting to share ideas, reflect on experiences, discuss service issues, learn new skills, and work on team-building. Retreats are a valuable resource, but much of their potential can be wasted if they are planned ineffectively. Retreats should always be a forum for learning and working together that supports the organization's mission, goals, and priorities.

Consider the following when implementing a retreat:

- Define the desired outcome of the retreat.
- Determine who needs to attend in order to accomplish the desired outcome.
- Decide whether you will use a facilitator to help plan the agenda and manage the retreat.
- If you use a facilitator, decide whether s/he should be from outside the organization or inside the organization.
- Once you know how many people to invite and the type of space you need, identify a facility that can accommodate your requirements.
- Visit the facility if you are not familiar with it to verify the accommodations.
- Develop an agenda for the meeting and determine whether you want the attendees to do any work prior to the retreat.
- Schedule some "fun" or "down" time for attendees to reflect and just enjoy being together.
- Hold retreats that last longer than a day at the beginning of the week. Participants will be much more focused if they have had the weekend to relax.
- Reconfirm details with the facility a few days before the retreat.
- Arrive early the day of the retreat to set up the room.
- Ask everyone to complete a Retreat Feedback Form at the end of the retreat.

Source: Corporation for National and Community Service. Handbook for Continuous Improvement, "Tools and Practices," and "Participant/Staff Retreat," pp. 1-12.

Publicize Your Training Events Here

Remember to use VANNO's website calendar and monthly newsletter as a way to publicize training events you are offering. Many nonprofit staff and volunteers are willing to travel 1-2 hours in search of high quality professional development, so you may very well attract attendees from beyond your local community. Send your announcements to info@vanno.org, or call 804-794-8689.