



THE VANNO VOICE

Virginia Network of Nonprofit Organizations (VANNO)
*Providing affordable information, resources and advocacy for
nonprofit organizations throughout Virginia.*

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July 2007

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. You can also read past issues on the VANNO website at www.vanno.org.

July Classes & Training Opportunities



Fairfax: **Technology and Volunteer Management**
July 25, 2007, 8:30 am - 12:30 pm
Contact: Volunteer Fairfax, Emily Gibbs,
703-246.3460, ext.0
www.volunteerfairfax.org

Tri Cities: **Grant Writing Strategies**
July 14, 10:30 am - 2:30 pm
Hopewell Public Library

July 19 & July 26, 9:00 am - 11:00 am
Petersburg, at the Cameron Foundation

Contact: Focus INC Series,
804-957-5913

Norfolk: **Major Gifts: Finding the Perfect Donors**
July 18, 9:30 am - 11:30 am Free!
Contact: Benevon, Karin Powers,

Richmond: **Major Gifts: Finding the Perfect Donors**
July 17, 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm Free!
Contact: Benevon, Karin Powers,
206-709-9400 x.104 or
karin.power@benevon.com

Fairfax ELI Seeks Community Projects

The ELI Community Service Project Committee of the Emerging Leaders Institute (ELI), an initiative of Leadership Fairfax, is soliciting community project proposals for the 2007-2008 program year, which begins in October 2007. The deadline for project applications is July 31, 2007.

If your organization project proposal is accepted, the project will be planned by a team of ELI class participants during October through December 2007. Projects are executed January through May 2008.

The Leadership Fairfax program for emerging leaders is a 9-month leadership development program for emerging leaders in corporations, nonprofits, and the government. The program focuses on developing core leadership competencies, mentoring support and community service. ELI's constituency is individuals (generally 25-35 years of age) who are moving up in their organizations and have the desire to sharpen their skills and learn how to give back to their community.

For more information, visit www.leadershipfairfax.org or contact Joe Meyer at 703-538-7072 or joe.meyer@shelterhouse.org.

IRS Invites Comments on Redesigned Form 990

The IRS is now requesting public comments on a discussion draft of a redesigned Form 990, *Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax*, filed by many public charities and other tax-exempt organizations. The redesign of Form 990 is based on three guiding principles: enhancing transparency, promoting tax compliance, and minimizing the burden on the filing organization. Comments are due no later than September 14, 2007.

You can see the draft and find out how to submit comments on the IRS website at the following location: www.irs.gov/charities/article/0,,id=171216,00.html. You can also sign up for *EO Update*, our electronic newsletter with

information for tax-exempt organizations and tax practitioners - attorneys, accounts, and others - who represent them. For your convenience, here's a link to the newsletter information page: www.irs.gov/charities/article/0,,id=135307,00.html.

Stay tuned for more information on this from VANNO's Public Policy Committee.

NAEIR: A Resource for Free Merchandise



Does your nonprofit need quantities of office supplies, toys, tools, software, janitorial supplies, books, classroom materials, clothing, etc.? The National Association for the Exchange of Industrial Resources (NAEIR) may be just what you're looking for.

They collect donations of top-quality, brand-name, new, unused inventory from manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers and then redistributes those goods to nonprofits throughout the US. Over 500 top companies donate to this program as a way to make good use of excess inventory due to production overruns, returns, discontinued models, cancelled orders and so on.

Once you join NAEIR, you will receive a 200-page catalogue every 10 weeks listing thousands of items available. You simply look through the catalogue, fill out a request form and send it in. You will be charged a small fee to cover the shipping and handling costs, but all the items you receive are absolutely FREE of charge.

Curious? Call NAEIR at 1-800-562-0955 (then press 7) and request a free Supply Information Kit with all the details about how to join NAEIR and begin saving money.

Get Confidential Answers to Ethical Questions

If you are unclear on the ethics of a situation in or around your nonprofit, an answer could be just an e-mail away. *Nonprofit Quarterly* magazine welcomes your questions for a feature called the Nonprofit Ethicist, in which an associate professor at DePaul University answers reader questions on subjects from conflicts of interest and fundraising practices to fraud.

Here's how it works:

- Describe your concern in an e-mail to editorinchief@nonprofitquarterly.org (include the word "Ethicist" in the Subject). All correspondence is confidential. Be as specific as possible without revealing the organization.
- You will receive a personal answer by return e-mail within a week.
- Several problems and answers are chosen to be published in *Nonprofit Quarterly*.
- If your letter is chosen, you get final editing rights.

You can read past Nonprofit Ethicist columns at www.nonprofitquarterly.org.

Source: "Nonprofit Insight", June 21, 2007. Clifton Gunderson LLP. Glen Allen, Virginia (804) 270-2200

The Make It Your Own Awards

This new initiative from the Case Foundation is about giving grants, tools, and recognition to people who are coming together to discuss what matters, form solutions, and take action.

Twenty semi-finalists will each receive \$10,000 grants to start bringing their ideas to life. Four final grant recipients will then be chosen by the public using an online voting system. These finalists will each be awarded an additional \$25,000 grant. United Way of America is partnering with the Case Foundation to promote this program.

The Make It Your Own Awards came about in response to research showing that many people feel disconnected from public leaders and institutions and don't believe they have the power to make a real difference in their community. These findings were the reason for a paper released by the Case Foundation last fall, *Citizens at the Center: A New Approach to Civic Engagement*, suggesting that if people are actually going to become and stay engaged in their communities, one thing has to happen first: they must have more chances to connect with one another (including those with whom they might disagree), and figure out how they can work together for the common good.

This kind of "citizen-centered" approach represents a subtle, yet powerful, shift that encourages people to create new spaces where they can come together, become connected to each other, and make a difference as a community working toward a common vision and real action.

All applicants welcome, ages 14 and up.

Application deadline: August 8.

To learn more, visit www.casefoundation.org/make-it-your-own/awards?source=partnerNL_UNITEDWY or contact Randy Punley, United Way of America at randy.punley@uwa.unitedway.org.

Source: rappahannockunitedway-infoshare@yahooogroups.com

I Survived a Year on a Committee!

By Eric Westover and Bob Harris,
CAE



Every organization has them --- standing committees and task forces. Committees are a way to involve volunteers, benefit from their input, advance efforts and identify new leaders. Last year I *cringed* when I was asked to serve on a committee. Before I said "yes," I was determined to learn how to be a *good committee member*. You see I've served on committees that wasted my time, had no clear purpose and succumbed to egos and politics.

Now that my year of service has ended I can say, "I survived a year on a committee!" Let me share how I approached my committee work with the following **Ten Committee Survival Tips:**

Purpose - My first question was "What's the purpose of the committee?" I wanted to ensure a good reason existed for our committee. (I'm in favor of eliminating or merging unnecessary committees.)

Charges - Now that I knew its purpose, I wanted to be sure the committee had received a clear work assignment. What did the incoming board chair communicate to the committee's chair about expectations and outcomes? The clearer the charge --- the more likely our success.

History - I knew our standing committee was not new to the organization. So I asked the committee chairman about last year's records. I wanted to know what had been accomplished and what work was pending. The staff gave us the prior "committee notebook." It explained rationales and helped us avoid redundant discussions. We made a commitment to help future committees by taking good notes and keeping all of our drafts and minutes in a similar notebook.

Performance Measures - At our first meeting I asked how we would measure performance. I suggested we include accountability (who, when) and quantifiability (how many, how much) to gauge progress during our term. Everyone agreed and we achieved all of our aims within the year.

Linkage - Committees usually serve at the pleasure of the board. Thus, we asked how we would be expected to keep the board informed of our ideas and progress. Did they expect written reports? Would a board liaison attend our meetings? Would a staff member be assigned to our committee? We respected protocol by asking questions at the onset and viewing the organizational chart that showed hierarchy and information flow.

Vice Chair - We were told our committee had a chairman and he would schedule meetings, set agendas, etc. He inadvertently missed our second meeting and we sat there with no leadership, nearly wasting three hours (multiplied by 12 persons). We suggested that the chairman appoint a vice chair that would serve as a backup and could be a potential future committee leader.

Timeline - We set a schedule for the year. How often would we meet in person and by phone? What mid-year goals did we need to accomplish to stay on schedule? We developed a committee calendar and stuck to it.

Alignment - I knew a committee could not operate in a vacuum. We were part of a larger structure that included other committees, policies, a mission statement and probably a strategic plan. We asked for a copy of the strategic plan to ensure that our work fit inside the long-term goals. The mission statement was a reminder to stay on task; we read the mission at every meeting and included it on the bottom of the agenda.

Meeting Agendas- We promised that meetings would not waste our time. To that end, the chairman suggested distributing our agenda 14 days before meetings. It helped me prepare, anticipate discussions, and reminded me of items I had offered to do but had forgotten.

Minutes and a Final Report - We agreed to keep meeting minutes and distribute them promptly. This served as a reminder of our plans and progress. The staff appreciated receiving the minutes and shared them with the board chair to keep him apprised. At the end of the year, we assembled all the agendas, minutes and supporting documents to create a committee notebook for next year's group.

Not all committee experiences are so positive. Use these tips to educate your committees.

Source: Bob Harris, CAE, is chairman of the NonProfitCenter.com (bob@rchcae.com). Eric Westover is chairman of the UpperEx National Outreach Coalition serving arm amputees (eric@UppperEx.org).

Website Designs: Clean and Simple



No more clutter, tiny fonts, and homepages that are stuffed full. Web 2.0 site designs are now advocating for a much simpler, more basic approach.

Today's simple, bold, elegant page designs actually deliver more with less.

It may be difficult for your nonprofit to adopt this look with so many stakeholders in your organization clamoring for attention (and rightfully so). But, if you can achieve it, you could redesign your website into something clean, lean, and meaningful.

An excellent how-to primer is available from Web Design from Scratch, a U.K. site at www.webdesignfromscratch.com/web-2.0-design-style-guide.cfm#separate-top-sections. Their Web 2.0 style design guide is the perfect first step to help you think about how to update your site and maximize its potential.

Books Worth Reading



Managing Executive Transitions: A Handbook for Nonprofit Organizations

This handbook is for nonprofit organizations that are going through - or anticipating - a leadership change. Developed by

the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation and a network of community-based agencies, the handbook covers the three major phases of getting ready, recruitment and hiring, and post hiring. Price: \$4.00. Available from the National Assembly at www.nassembly.org.

Hardball Lobbying for Nonprofits by Barry Hessenius. A comprehensive guide on how to build effective real world lobbying efforts that are supported by a wide coalition of organizations, are sustainable, and effective in influencing decision makers at local, state and federal levels. Published by MacMillan & Company.

Federal Public Policy Updates

- The Internal Revenue Service has released a revised

version of Publication 561. The publication explains how to determine the value of non-cash charitable contributions and how to claim a deduction for non-cash gifts on tax returns. View the publication at www.irs.gov/publications/p561/index.html.

- The new Revenue Ruling 2007-41 provides guidance on nonprofit political activities. The ruling includes 21 examples of the application of facts and circumstances test in areas such as voter guides and education, candidate appearances and forums, and issue advocacy. View the details at www.irs.gov/charities/article/0,,id=170893,00.html.

VA Nonprofit Tax Law Changes July 1

The current procedure by which a nonprofit entity may qualify for tax exemption includes this provision: *If the entity's gross annual revenue was \$250,000 or greater in the previous year, then the entity must provide a financial audit performed by an independent certified public accountant.*

During the recent legislative session a revised law was passed which provides a higher threshold for requiring a CPA audit, \$1 million instead of \$250,000. It also permits either a financial review or a CPA audit if the gross was between \$750,000 and \$1 million. Effective July 1, 2007 this provision reads as follows.

If the entity's gross annual revenue was \$1 million or greater in the previous year, then the entity must provide a financial audit performed by an independent certified public accountant. If the entity's gross annual revenue was between \$750,000 and \$1 million, then the entity must provide either a financial audit performed by an independent certified public accountant or a financial review performed by an independent certified public accountant.

The amendment may be seen in context in the Code of Virginia at this site:
leg1.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp504.exe?071+ful+CHAP0698

Coming Soon: Your Money or Your Mission?

September 26-29, 2007 Arlington, VA

This national conference presented by the National Center on Nonprofit Enterprise (NCNE) and its partners will offer keynote speeches, seminars and master classes on how a nonprofit can be sustainable and true to its mission. Topics will include:

- Planning to achieve Mission.

- Securing Resources.
- Managing Risk.
- Nonprofits and Business.

More details available soon at www.nationalcne.org.

Recent Changes at VANNO

VANNO is pleased to announce the hiring of its first full-time Executive Director, Deborah Barfield Williamson, who will assume that position in early August. Read more on our home page at www.vanno.org.

Thanks to a website upgrade, it is now possible to join VANNO on-line using an electronic form and credit card payment system. Several Virginia nonprofits have already taken advantage of this new option!

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.

Email: info@vanno.org

Phone: 804-794-8689

Web: www.vanno.org