

GIVING

To be or not to be a nonprofit

BY ANNE DOUGLAS

Director of Programs
Southwest Florida Community Foundation

Let's say you are an active volunteer and a supporter of many worthwhile charitable causes. You have a wonderful idea for how you can help the community. Perhaps you are passionate about children's issues, or perhaps you are passionate about caring for the elderly. Maybe you have identified a need that you think is not being met in our community, or maybe you have come up with a creative way to help people. You feel that you have something worthwhile to contribute. And your next thought is, "Why don't I start a nonprofit so I can raise money to provide the services that are needed?"

After all, the nonprofit sector is growing faster than either the corporate or government sectors. According to the Urban Institute and the National Center for Charitable Statistics, the nonprofit sector grew by 36 percent from 1996 to 2006, to 1.4 million nationally. In Florida, the increase was even more dramatic during the same time period, with the number of nonprofits increasing from 40,000 to almost 68,000, a change of 70 percent. In Lee County alone, more than 900 nonprofits are registered.

But this huge increase begs the question: how are all of these nonprofits surviving? Are there enough resources to support existing nonprofits, much less the creation of new nonprofits? These are especially pertinent questions in the current economic climate, when well-established and viable nonprofits are seeing reductions in government funding as well as individual donations and grant funding.

So before you file those papers with the State Corporation Commission and Internal Revenue Service, there are some factors you might want to consider. First, starting a nonprofit is not that easy. It's like creating a new business and requires much more than passion and commitment. It requires a lot of research, planning, and paperwork to launch successfully. Some questions to ask yourself are: What kind of nonprofit do I want to start, and what kind of services do I want to offer? Are there other nonprofits offering similar services in the community,

and what advantage would my nonprofit have over these other nonprofits? How will I fund and sustain my nonprofit? Do I have the entrepreneurial spirit and skills to successfully launch and manage a nonprofit, or can I recruit people with the appropriate expertise?

If, in answering the above questions, you realize that starting a brand-new nonprofit is not the way to go, do not be discouraged. There are alternatives to starting a nonprofit that will still allow you to pursue your passion and your cause. The first thing you can do is research nonprofits in the community and see if there are organizations with similar programs to ones you are interested in starting. There is no need to duplicate services if there are already viable programs being offered in the community that you can get involved with. If you have identified a community need that is not currently being met, consider contacting organizations with compatible programs and assess their interest in working with you to develop a special project or program to address that unmet need. This approach would enable you to create a program without taking on the legal, financial, and reporting requirements of a new nonprofit.

You can find out more about the requirements and benefits, as well as pitfalls, of starting a nonprofit by visiting Board Source and other nonprofit resources on the internet. Additionally, the Southwest Florida Community Foundation has recently doubled the size of its Nonprofit Resource Center book collection, adding new titles about nonprofit start-up, as well as fundraising, marketing, and board development, to name just a few of the topics. These books are available for check-out, and I encourage you to visit the Center and take advantage of the new nonprofit resources, as well as the Foundation Center database. ■

The Southwest Florida Community Foundation has been supporting the communities of Lee, Charlotte, Collier, Glades and Hendry through endowed funds for nearly 32 years. With assets of more than \$57 million and over 320 endowed funds, the Community Foundation has provided more than \$30 million in grants and scholarships to the communities it serves.

For more information, call (239) 274-5900, or visit their Web site at www.floridacomunity.com.



PUZZLE ANSWERS

9	4	5	1	6	2	3	8	7
2	6	8	7	3	9	5	4	1
7	3	1	4	8	5	6	2	9
6	2	9	3	7	1	4	5	8
5	1	4	9	2	8	7	6	3
8	7	3	6	5	4	9	1	2
4	9	6	2	1	3	8	7	5
3	5	2	8	4	7	1	9	6
1	8	7	5	9	6	2	3	4



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	WEEKDAYS	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
3 am			
4 am	BBC World Service	Jazz with Bob Parlocha	Jazz with Bob Parlocha
5 am		BBC World Service	
6 am			BBC World Service
7 am	Morning Edition	The Parent's Journal	
8 am		Calling All Pets	Speaking of Faith
9 am		Weekend Edition	Weekend Edition
10 am	BBC World Service "Newshour"		
11 am	The Diane Rehm Show	Car Talk	Fresh Air Weekend
12 noon	On Point	Wait, Wait Don't Tell Me!	WGCU's Gulf Coast Live Arts Edition <i>encore</i>
1 pm	WGCU Call-in Shows*	The Splendid Table	This American Life <i>encore</i>
2 pm	BBC's World Have Your Say	This American Life	Studio 360
3 pm	Talk of the Nation	Living on Earth	New Letters on the Air Latino USA
4 pm		National Geographic World Talk	A Prairie Home Companion <i>encore</i>
5 pm	All Things Considered	To the Best of Our Knowledge	
6 pm		All Things Considered	All Things Considered
7 pm	Marketplace	A Prairie Home Companion	Car Talk <i>encore</i>
8 pm	Fresh Air		
9 pm		Jazz at Lincoln Center	BBC World Service
10 pm	Jazz with Bob Parlocha (Fridays 11pm-5am) World Café (Fridays only 9-11pm)	Echoes	American Routes
11 pm		Jazz w/Bob Parlocha	Jazz w/Bob Parlocha
-3 am			

*Gulf Coast Live! M-W / Arts Edition Th / Sound Off with Sasha F

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