

GIVING

# Nonprofit survival in these tough times

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These are unsettling and uncertain times for the nonprofit sector, as every day it seems we are greeted with more and more bad news about the economy. Many local nonprofits are already seeing cuts in government funding and fewer individual and corporate donations, while at the same time their client caseloads and operating costs are steadily increasing. Nonprofit leaders are wondering what they can do to minimize the negative impact of the economic downturn to ensure that their nonprofits can survive, if not thrive, in tough economic times.

First of all, it's important not to panic.

The tendency may be to overreact and begin cutting your budget, but before making cuts, examine your finances, operations, and services to make certain that you are not cutting costs that will impact the long-term stability and sustainability of your organization. Think strategically about ways to operate more efficiently and cut costs without eliminating staff, so you can ensure that you are continuing to fulfill your mission.

According to the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, it is absolutely critical during tough economic times to find new and creative ways to communicate the impact of your mission on those you serve. Now is not the time to cut back on marketing and fundraising efforts. It is now more important than ever that you tell your story and make the story a compelling one, especially since most of you are seeing an even greater demand for your services.

Look for ways to diversify your fundraising program. If you are too dependent on government and grant funding, your budget is more likely to take a hit in an economic downturn or recession. Be creative and look for low-cost fundraising strategies. A costly gala that takes significant staff time may not be the way to go, as many of the fundraising events in our region are raising less money than they have in previous years. You can lower your fundraising costs by making a more personal appeal directly to your donors.

And speaking of donors, you should treat your donors like gold by making a

personal appeal and letting them know how much you appreciate their support. Take the time to cultivate, and don't be afraid to cultivate new donors. Donors may feel that they have less to give, especially if they are heavily invested in the stock market, but you can communicate how much their support is needed, especially now. Focus on your highest value donors and long-term supporters who truly have a passion for your mission. They are more likely to donate even when times are tough.

It is also very important for board members to be actively engaged and committed to fundraising for the organization. You can't leave the fundraising to the executive director or development director and expect to achieve significant results. Board members need to be ambassadors for their organization and share their compelling story with their circle of influence.

Another suggestion would be to turn to the Web and e-mail for lower-cost fundraising and marketing efforts, which also have the added benefit of taking less staff time. We have added some new books about online marketing and fundraising to our Resource Library, so I encourage you to check them out.

Also consider thinking outside the box and look for ways to collaborate and partner with similar nonprofits to share resources. Are there opportunities to share staff and equipment to cut costs, even perhaps to do a joint fundraiser?

If you focus on your core services and what is essential to achieve your mission, cultivate your donors and diversify your fundraising plan, as well as take a thoughtful and strategic approach to trimming your budget, you are likely to successfully weather the economic storm we are in. And don't lose sight of those you are here to serve, the people who are most in need at times like this. They need you to be strong and not give up hope! ■

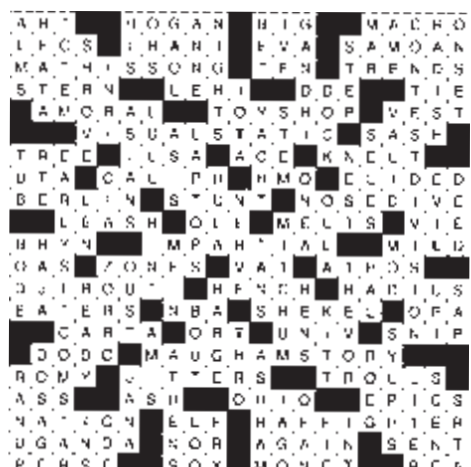
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*For more information, call (239) 274-5900, or visit their Web site at [www.floridacommunity.com](http://www.floridacommunity.com).*



## PUZZLE ANSWERS

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



### Southwest Reader's Choice Poll \* Big Al's City Grill Awarded:

- \* Best All Around Restaurant
- \* Best Sports Bar
- \* Best Happy Hour
- \* Best Family Restaurant
- \* Best Chicken Wings
- \* Best Pizza



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