



Volunteer consultants like (from left) Don Barber, Lisa Zafarana and Myron Frasier are ready to welcome newcomers to the fall session of the DTE Energy Foundation Leaders Circle program.

### Popular leadership program returning

## "I found my voice ... "

Looking to brush up your leadership skills? Smart move. Effective leadership is crucial to the success of any organization, and such abilities can be taught and learned. With that in mind, the Detroit Executive Service Corps (DESC) is partnering again with the DTE Energy Foundation and Marygrove College to offer a unique leadership training program for the nonprofit community.

The fall session of the DTE Energy Foundation Leaders Circle program gets underway Friday, Oct. 24, on the Marygrove campus. Designed for the nonprofit leader (executive directors, supervisors, department heads, first-time supervisors – any staff member in a leadership and/or management role), this is a proven, peer-based program that assists participants with solving problems and facing challenges in a confidential, supportive and focused environment.

"I had never been asked about or challenged to improve my leadership," said Heather Carmona, Executive Director of the

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## Need help? Get assessed!

Today's nonprofits face multiple challenges, like dwindling contributions, escalating demand for services, and increasing costs for basic items like food and gas.

Focused on enhancing nonprofit performance for the past 26 years, DESC has a strengthened commitment to nonprofits and to improving services to better support their vital work.

Want to take advantage of our expertise? It's easy! We are inviting all nonprofit organizations to participate in complimentary assessments that will show their strengths and weaknesses. This no-charge service is available in three key areas:

- Management Improvement
- Financial Management
- Strategic Alliance Analysis

After the assessment process is complete, affordable services are available to help your nonprofit make the necessary shifts to adjust to today's environment.

Call DESC Director of Programs Vanessa Guillebeaux at 248-395-2840 to make an appointment for a complimentary assessment or to learn more about Corps services.

### **DESC website gets a makeover!**

A redesigned website is giving current and prospective supporters, volunteers and clients an easy way to learn about DESC and what the Corps has to offer. Now, users can register online for workshops and trainings, as well as support DESC with a contribution.

We invite you to explore our enhanced site, and hope you will find it useful. Our web address is still [www.esc-detroit.org](http://www.esc-detroit.org)

# WSO and DESC combine to make sweet music

The Warren Symphony Orchestra has given hundreds of concerts in southeastern Michigan since its first season in 1973-74. Three times in recent years, WSO was voted "Outstanding Community Orchestra" at the Detroit Music Awards.

But creating beautiful music is only one aspect of their success. With a miniscule part-time staff, WSO must rely on its board of directors to handle the challenges that face all nonprofits: funding, effective management of resources and flexible long-term planning.

Enter DESC. Seeking improvement in its basic business model, WSO began its relationship with the Corps three years ago. An assessment was the focus in 2005 recommending a business plan analysis. The analysis included a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis and was conducted in 2006. A refined mission statement clarified purpose and direction.

Next, the board and DESC consultants identified four major focus areas: succession planning, fund development, marketing to increase audience and development/recruitment of board members.

Adopted by the WSO board in 2007, the DESC-inspired business plan is already producing impressive results.

"In the summer of 2007, we started with the fund development recommendations," recalls WSO President Joyce Lajack. "We implemented them with our contribution campaign in December."

The result? "The response was tremendous. Despite the tight economy, our annual individual contributions increased by 75 percent!" Lajack said. (December's contribution campaign increased by 81%)

Lajack, who is also a vice president and senior project manager for Comerica Bank, has utilized the Corps to improve her own skills, too.

***"The response was tremendous. Despite the tight economy, our annual individual contributions increased by 75 percent!"***

Joyce Lajack, President  
WSO Board of Directors

A past participant in DESC's popular Leaders Circle program, she contacted the Corps when she was named to head the WSO Board in 2007. "I asked for help in two areas: fund development and coaching as a board president," she said. "It was a truly beneficial experience."

Board development is well underway, and a succession plan approved this spring is already being used to recruit a new music director for Warren's only professional orchestra.

To find out more about WSO, visit their website at [warrensymphony.org](http://warrensymphony.org).

To get the kind of help that WSO did for YOUR nonprofit, contact DESC Director of Programs Vanessa Guillebeaux at 248-395-2840.

Published by  
Detroit Executive Service Corps  
16250 Northland Dr., Suite 390,  
Southfield, MI 48075

248-395-2840  
Fax: 248-395-2844  
[dmcgraw@esc-detroit.org](mailto:dmcgraw@esc-detroit.org)  
Web Site: [www.esc-detroit.org](http://www.esc-detroit.org)

## "I found my voice and became more confident ... "

*continued from front*

Woodward Avenue Action Association (WAAA) and past Leaders Circle participant. "Through the peer support of my Leaders Circle, I found my voice and became confident with my leadership. Both WAAA and I have grown and become more effective through this program."

The program's structure is the key to such results. "Participants don't just exchange cards, they intensely interact with each other for four months," notes DESC President Deanna McGraw.

Carmona agrees. "We have built a support group that we will rely upon for years to come ... way beyond the life of the Circle," she says.

The DTE Energy Foundation Leaders Circle program includes six hours of interactive classroom-style leadership training combined with 18 hours of group discussions facilitated by DESC volunteer consultants. These sessions will be held from 8 a.m. to noon.

The cost to attend ranges from \$60 to \$300 – a fee which is based on each organization's annual budget.

Space is limited, so register early! Register online with a credit card at [www.esc-detroit.org](http://www.esc-detroit.org) or call DESC at 248-395-2840.

### **SOME BASICS**

**When:** October 24, 2008 through January 2009

**Where:** Marygrove College campus, McNichols and Wyoming

**New this year:** A limited-time 50-percent discount if two or more individuals from the same organization register for the program.

## A conversation with one Foundation Partner ...

*Vitality is essential to ensuring a healthy, productive and thriving community. For 26 years, the Detroit Executive Service Corps' success has been focused on helping other nonprofits succeed. As a leader in this effort, we see first-hand the positive effects of our services in the nonprofit and educational communities.*

*DESC impacts more than a million citizens and children annually through the organizations it serves, and this is possible because of our financial supporters. We recently sat down with one of our foundation partners, Therese Thorn, Trustee/Treasurer of the Milton M. Ratner Foundation, to get her perspective on the difference DESC is making.*

### **Therese, how do you and your fellow trustees perceive DESC?**

First I must say, as a small, low-key foundation we look for ways to leverage our gifts. Our mission is focused on education, research and promoting the physical and mental

betterment of mankind. That is why the trustees of the Ratner Foundation are investing in DESC initiatives. The work DESC does is a very good fit for two of our three mission goals.

Our trustees see DESC as a highly professional, efficient and accountable organization that understands the benefit of leveraging talent from a body of experienced volunteers to educate, improve and enhance other nonprofits.

### **What value does DESC bring to the Ratner Foundation and the community?**

The value we see for our foundation is that the funds we provide DESC are spent wisely. DESC's efforts have created a ripple effect where our gift keeps on giving. It is very satisfying to see how DESC is educating and guiding these nonprofit organizations so they are able to fulfill their goals to improve society. This past year our foundation set up a three-year funding pledge for DESC. The trustees are well aware of market issues, and

with the economic downturn they wanted DESC to have some assurance they would be able to continue to meet the community needs.

### **Do you have any final thoughts?**

Yes. My first encounter with DESC came as board chair St. Anne's Mead Senior Living Center in Oakland County. We were a small organization that needed guidance, and one of our board members recommended we contact the Corps.

DESC worked with us on a number of issues, from financial concerns to organizational governance to the development of a five-year strategic plan. The insight DESC's consultants provided was truly beneficial to St. Anne's Mead.

I'd like to commend DESC and its volunteers for sharing their expertise with the nonprofit community. Their professional skills are a tremendous lifeline for these organizations.

I would also encourage others in the community to make an investment in DESC through a financial contribution. Your gift will keep on giving.



### **Corporate winners**

The Annual Volunteer Recognition Luncheon acknowledges two vital components in DESC's success: volunteers and donors. Accepting awards for the latter at the August 27 event are (left) President C. David Campbell, receiving the Excellence in Giving award on behalf of the McGregor Fund, and (right) Extang President Bill Reminder, holding the 2007 Outstanding Corporate Support Award, presented to Extang Corporation.



# Acknowledging excellence: 2008 Volunteer Luncheon

The event was delayed from May to August when a storm cut power for days to some areas, including the venue. But the 10th Annual Volunteer



Making a humorous point is keynote luncheon speaker Richard E. Blouse Jr., President and CEO of the Detroit Regional Chamber.

Recognition Luncheon went off without a hitch August 27, as DESC staff and volunteers gathered at the Birmingham Athletic Club for a tribute to the individuals and donors whose support makes the important work of the Corps possible.

*See next page for our 2007 corporate winners!*



Sharing the pride of their achievement are Consultant of the Year Ann Stuntz and Jim Suhay, who received the Robert F. Magill Outstanding Leadership Award. Not present is Tom (Jim) Grimaldi, who earned the Chair's Choice Award. All the honors were based on the recipients' work in 2007.

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT ON GWENDOLYN ESCO DAVIS

Gwendolyn Davis joined the ranks of DESC volunteers just three years ago, but she definitely hit the ground running.

Since then, she's been involved in several Corps projects, including assessment interviews, business planning, board development and strategic planning.

"I had known of the work DESC does, and I'd been thinking about joining for some time," she recalls. "A dear friend and neighbor, Dennis Dupre, helped me get involved a little sooner."

It's not that she has a lot of time on her hands. The retired State of Michigan Administration officer runs her own consultancy practice, and serves on the national board of directors

for the Association of Strategic Planners, as well as board vice president for Matrix Theatre.

But giving back to community is a priority that she schedules for. Currently, that means working as DESC team leader in creating a Strategic Plan for the Detroit Urban League.

Other commitments for the Shaw University graduate (she holds a B.S. in Business/Mathematics) include husband Alex, three adult daughters and "three adorable grandsons."

Hobbies include the traditional (gardening and family) and the not-so-traditional. "I love sailing



and would love to get back into fencing," she says.

## Boost your board!

An effective, focused and motivated board is essential to your organization's success. To get them there, take advantage of any or all of the training sessions known as BoardWALK. A series of seven workshops focusing on building the capacity of nonprofit board members and executive staff, the workshops are held on the campus of Lawrence Technological University in Southfield from 9a.m. to noon. Registration is \$35 per workshop. BoardWALK is presented by DESC, Lawrence Technological University and United Way for S.E. Michigan.

- Nov. 7: Boardsmanship Essentials
- Dec. 5 : Making Your Strategic Plan Work
- Jan. 9 : Fund Development for Board Members
- Feb. 6 : Financial Responsibilities of the Board
- March 6: Building Your Board
- April 4: The Effective Board Team
- May 1: Executive Director as Leader

To register, visit [www.uwsem.org/boardwalk](http://www.uwsem.org/boardwalk) or call 313-226-9337.