DESC
DETROIT EXECUTIVE SERVICE CORPS
VOLUNTEER CONSULTANTS FOR NONPROFITS
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Corps creating a SMART alternative for nonprofits

America's charitable community plays an indispensable role in improving communities across the nation. However, after more than a decade of growth, the nonprofit sector has reached a crossroads.

As their numbers grow – nearly 1.5 million nationally and over 43,000 in Michigan* – the competition for private donations, government aid, volunteers and visibility has become more intense. A nonprofit's continued success no longer depends on expanding services or creating new programs, but on innovative management and a revitalized organizational structure.

COLLABORATORS IN DESIGNING a comprehensive resource for nonprofits include (from left): Sarida Scott and Heidi Mucherie of Community Legal Resources; Mitzy Sharp Futro, Michigan Nonprofit Association; Deanna McGraw, DESC; Carmen Thomas, United Way for SE Michigan; Dione Alexander, Nonprofit Finance Fund; and Dana Hoskins, DESC.

Many nonprofits are having difficulty meeting those challenges. As funding and resources continue to decline, all nonprofits must begin to consider mergers and alliances in their strategic planning process.

The real challenge for nonprofits is finding a comprehensive resource to help explore the options. With that in mind, DESC, in collaboration with Community Legal Resources, Michigan Nonprofit Association, Nonprofit Finance Fund and United Way for Southeastern Michigan, is designing a program – Strategic Mergers & Alliances Resource Training (SMART) – to address that need.

The collaboration team is in the process of designing the program and will be looking to pilot the initial design early in 2008.

The development of this program is possible because of major grant funding from the Hudson-Webber Foundation and additional funding from United Way for Southeastern Michigan.

*(*Independent Sector, June 2006)*

Keynoting a landmark luncheon

Making the case for strong business and nonprofit community ties, Crain's Detroit Business Publisher Mary Kramer addresses attendees at November's national Executive Service Corps Affiliate Network conference. For more on the first-ever event, please turn to back page.

Modest budget? Get targeted assistance

It may be a little unwieldy, but the title of one of DESC's newest programs says it all: Financial Management Solutions for Nonprofit Success.

In May 2005, the Community Foundation of Southeast Michigan granted DESC, in partnership with Lawrence Technical University, a financial competency planning grant.

The grant had two objectives: to identify financial management strengths and weaknesses among area nonprofits; and to propose a program model that would improve the quality of financial management practices in those with annual operating budgets under $1 million.

In March 2006, a report was presented to the Community Foundation of Southeast Michigan with the findings of the study, as well as a proposed service model for the program.

Since then, DESC, in partnership with the Michigan Nonprofit Association (MNA), has been busy developing specific educational, training and consulting offerings to improve the financial management competencies of area nonprofits.

The Solutions program utilizes a basic financial management model that includes a focus on planning, controlling, reporting, compliance, organization and retention. Specific offerings available now are financial management assessment, training for staff and board members, and management consulting assistance.

A pilot phase of the Solutions program began in September and will continue through early 2008. We are in the process of securing funders to support a three-year program to begin in 2008.

The Corps is seeking both clients and volunteers for the Solutions program. Call 248-395-2840 to get involved!

If you would like more information about this exciting new program or would like to participate, please contact volunteer consultant Dennis Dupre at 313-268-2322, or DESC President Deanna McGraw at 248-395-2840.

Volunteer Spotlight on ...

Service is the rent we pay to be living. It is the very purpose of life and not something you do in your spare time.
Marian Wright Edelman

Kimberly Simmons has never met children's rights activist Marian Edelman, but her life is a vibrant illustration of Edelman's philosophy.

During a near 20-year financial services career with National Bank of Detroit, she found time to initiate a Novi School Bank program titled BEAR (Be Excited About Reading) and served on a Novi schools committee for "Creating Collaborative Communities."

Leaving NBD in 1999, Kimberly was recruited by the Detroit Regional Chamber to direct their retention efforts. In late 2003, she accepted an appointment with the Detroit Institute of Arts as Associate Director of Major Gifts.

Currently, Kimberly is Managing Consultant of KLAS Consulting, a Detroit-based firm specializing in leadership development, fundraising and nonprofit strategies. Meanwhile, her volunteer commitments continue. A mentor to students at Charles Wright Academy, she also serves as group mentor for the American Society of Employers.

Kimberly L. Simmons

In addition to service on numerous committees and boards, Kimberly is President and Program Manager of the Quarlls Watkins Heritage Project, devoted to the public enlightenment of the Underground Railroad legacy.

A DESC volunteer since 2001, Kimberly first worked as an Educational Consultant, taking part in the Corps' popular Round Table Dialogues. In 2003, she switched to the business side of DESC's outreach efforts, and currently heads a Leaders Circle, bringing home an essential message to participants: "You're not alone in this world. There are people who care, and entire organizations dedicated to assisting your progress."

A resident of northwest Detroit's Bagley community, Kimberly describes herself as a "big music buff, with a passion for history."

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Mission
to enhance the effectiveness of nonprofits, governmental organizations and schools by transferring knowledge, skills and expertise of retired and working executive volunteers.

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Foundation grant supports SMART initiative

In business, whether in a nonprofit or for-profit setting, the only constant is change. To remain viable and sustainable, each organization must be willing to make discerning decisions. The real challenge facing these organizations is determining what actions can be taken to ensure their long-term sustainability.

In response to inquires on this issue, DESC presented a concept to the Hudson-Webber Foundation on how DESC and its partner organizations could facilitate a process for the nonprofit community to explore their options. The Hudson-Webber Foundation listened – and then awarded DESC and its partners a two-year grant to develop and pilot the SMART program featured on the front page of this publication.

Why did the Hudson-Webber Foundation support this program? The answer is simple, according to foundation president and CEO David Egner.

"With the economy like it is and the funding stream from the public and private sector not being as stable, many nonprofits will be discontinuing vital programs or go out of business, leaving a void in our community," he noted. "These nonprofits need a resource to turn to for assistance.

"It is our hope that SMART becomes the one-stop shop on mergers and alliances for the nonprofit community, providing boards and staffs of these organizations with a viable option that will create better capacity for the sector."

Since its founding in 1943, the Hudson-Webber Foundation has been dedicated to improving the vitality and quality of life in the metropolitan Detroit community. It accomplishes this by supporting the revitalization of the Detroit through economic development, the arts, creating safe communities and focusing on the overall health of the community.

Thank You, Donors, for Your Investment

The Detroit Executive Service Corps extends its sincere appreciation to the following 2007 corporate, foundation and individual donors for their support of our initiatives. As a partner, you play an integral role in our success and ability to make a difference in our community.

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In Honor of William Reminder
Asthma & Allergy Foundation

In Memory of Robert Magill
William F. Grier

In Memory of Will Scott
William F. Grier

In Memory of Boyce Tope
William F. Grier

Practicing what we preach: Corps plans for future

Every nonprofit organization should be prepared to meet the evolving needs of its constituency. We practice what we preach here at DESC, modeling management practices based on sustainability. Currently, we're developing a strategic plan to help us serve nonprofit organizations with optimum effectiveness in the next three years.

WORKING ON A strategic plan for DESC's next three years are (around the table, from left) Deanna McGraw, Suzanne Dibble, Myron Frasier, Garland Doyle, Dana Hoskins, Don Duncan, Jim Suhay, Linda Edwards, Kay Fitzpatrick, Gene Jacoby, Nick Metzger and Lynne Nagy.

Clients Participating in Planning Focus Groups

New Detroit
Serenity Services
The Community House
Crossroads for Youth
African Dance Works
Friends of the Belle Isle Aquarium
Asthma & Allergy Foundation of America
MCREST
Oak Park Business & Education Alliance
Puppett Art
Detroit Symphony Orchestra

The committee spearheading the process is comprised of clients, staff, consultants and DESC leadership. The input from key stakeholders is vital, and they are excited to be a part of the process. Focus group meetings allowed them to discuss ideas pertinent to the work of DESC.

It is imperative that the community at large has a vested interest in the services we provide. Once complete, the plan's action steps will aid the Corps in overcoming any threats and weaknesses, allowing us to capitalize on our opportunities and strengths.

Through this process, DESC is ensuring that its members will continue to enhance the operational effectiveness of nonprofit, educational and governmental organizations in the metropolitan Detroit area for years to come.

DESC hosts national conference

Far-flung affiliates unite in first-ever Detroit event

Surviving in Difficult Times was the theme for the Executive Service Corps Affiliate Network (ESCAN) national leadership conference held in Detroit Nov. 1, 2 and 3.

Twenty affiliates from across America converged on Detroit at the Atheneum Hotel and Conference Center in Greektown to share knowledge and strategies to strengthen the nation's nonprofits. Nearly 50 volunteer consultants from DESC attended the conference to meet their peers from every corner of the country.

The Detroit Chamber hosted the landmark event, with Chamber President Dick Blouse welcoming out-of-town guests.

This theme was on target for conference participants striving to increase the effectiveness and efficiencies of nonprofit organizations. Across the nation, ESC affiliates are experiencing difficulties with their own sustainability, as well as helping other organizations in their communities.

Mary Kramer, Publisher of Crain's Detroit Business, was keynote speaker at the luncheon and discussed the need for strong ties between business and the nonprofit community. The evening banquet featured Matrix Theater (a client with DESC for six years) with a presentation of "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest."

DESC's efforts in creating a memorable and instructive conference experience found an appreciative audience. ESCAN Executive Director Tom Young said, "We were very impressed with the City of Detroit and the wonderful hospitality of DESC. The conference was full of great information for our affiliates to take back to their own communities."

The local impact was equally positive. "DESC was pleased to host our first national conference here in Detroit. We not only learned and shared but were energized to fulfill our mission," DESC Board Chair Myron Frasier noted.

The Corps' first national conference was financially supported by Merrill Lynch and its partners.