

Group aids nonprofits at below-market rates

By GIDEON NKALA
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With a sluggish economy, and with most foundations scaling down their funding, nonprofit agencies are under more pressure than ever to implement austerity measures.

To help them do that, the Executive Services Corps offers expertise to area nonprofit organizations at below-market consulting rates. The corps, mostly made up of retired executives and businessmen, has about 35 volunteer members.

The group was started in 1999 to improve the quality of area nonprofits, said Cindy Worthy, the corps' executive director and its only paid staff member. But now is a time to help nonprofits reduce their overhead just to stay afloat, she said.

Since the group began, corps volunteers have helped 48 nonprofits, some more than once. Recent de-

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velopments have increased the need for the corps' services.

Two of Kansas City's largest foundations, the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation and the Hall Family Foundation, have scaled down their grants. In addition, many donors insist on their grants being spent specifically on direct services, rather than operating and administrative costs.

And another group that counseled nonprofits, the 23-year-old Center for Management Assistance, closed recently.

"There is a huge need for non-

profit-making organizations," Worthy said. "We have seen a lot of nonprofit organizations closing down."

The corps charges nonprofits \$25 to \$75 an hour for consulting help. Worthy said the rate depends on the experience of the consultant, the complexity of the task, and the size of the organization's budget.

Worthy said part of the corps' operating cost is covered by grants, corporate sponsorship, private donations and membership fees from the volunteers.

"We received seed money from Bank of America, and we qualified

for grants to purchase technology and office equipment," Worthy said.

"The volunteers were successful individuals in the various careers they were involved in. They are real smart people with skills in education, administration, management, medicine, and some volunteers are senior vice presidents of corporations."

The consultants specialize in four areas of business practice: strategy, information technology, human resources and operations.

One of the volunteers is Lew Goetz, a Harvard graduate who has 25 years of experience in industrial management, global marketing, strategic mapping and customer service.

Goetz, who serves as the organization's director of operations, said he joined the corps because he "wanted to be involved in the future of Greater Kansas City."

As a volunteer, Goetz has worked

with a couple of nonprofits. He found them to be committed to their missions.

Goetz said the biggest challenge facing nonprofit organizations is implementing good planning decisions. He noted that one client adopted a planning method that he suggested, and not only followed it, but did it with more details than he had prescribed.

A new recruit to the consulting corps is Linda Jordan, a retired corporate vice president with expertise in organizations, communication and training. Like Goetz, Jordan said, she joined the consulting group so she could contribute to the community.

Jordan, who is working on her first project assignment with the Mattie Rhodes Center, said she is enjoying sharing her expertise.

"It is more focused and geared to the things I have ability in," Jordan said.

UCP of Greater Kansas City is one

of the consultant's clients. According to UCP's president, Bruce Scott, his organization provides services to people with disabilities in Jackson, Clay, Platte, Johnson and Wyandotte counties.

Scott's organization provides assistance in residential services, senior services, and information and referral needs.

"Their work has been exceptional," Scott said of the consulting group. "They have qualified and experienced people. They are a bargain, and we could not afford anybody in the open market because they would probably cost us five to six times more."

Besides helping nonprofits get more for their money, the corps might help the organizations get more money in the future. Worthy said that given the tight economy, donors are more likely to spend money on nonprofit organizations that spend precious resources prudently.

2.0 Executive Summary

2.1 The "Thank You Walt Disney" Enterprise

Thank You Walt Disney, Inc. (TYWD), a not-for-profit tax-exempt organization, will restore and further develop the site at 31st Street and Forest Avenue in Kansas City, Missouri where Walt Disney and a few associates* in 1922 started the Laugh-O-Gram Studio. The restored and further enhanced Studio site will become an interactive educational and exhibition center, presenting the art and industry of animation -- its origins here in Kansas City and the subsequent development in Hollywood and beyond. There also will be on-site education and demonstration of animation techniques. The art and industry of animation, and especially animated cartooning, really began in the Laugh-o-Gram Studio. Through the efforts of the Disneys, their associates, and later many others, animation methods and media have continuously broadened into a host of business and entertainment enterprises, with ever-expanding worldwide recognition and influence.

The Studio will document the beginnings and subsequent history of this development, providing background for educational and cultural programs and services concerning animation, primarily for school-age youth, but also for the general public. The Center will document and demonstrate animation techniques and applications, and will provide opportunities for hands-on experience with this art and technology. These programs and services will be offered both at the Center itself and at other locations, via electronic linkages and other media, in collaboration with groups and institutions having related purposes and interests.

*Among the early associates of Walt Disney were his brother Roy, Ub Iwerks, Hugh Harman, Rudolph Ising, Carl Stalling, Fritz Freleng, and Bugs Hardaway.

2.2 The Concept of the Studio

The Laugh-O-Gram Studio will be a locally, nationally, and internationally recognized resource for:

- Celebration and documentation of the history of animation -- starting with the dreams, ambition, and persistent, pioneering work of the young Walt Disney and his associates, first in Kansas City, later in Hollywood; and still later in a variety of enterprises launched by the Disney's and others, spanning the development of animation from the Laugh-O-Gram Studio's early achievements to today's and tomorrow's applications using Information Age technologies.
- Demonstration of the original and subsequently developed types and techniques of animation, as well as opportunities for hands-on experience in creating animation products.
- A focus on educational and entertainment programs and services, primarily for school-age youth and their families but also for the general public, both at the site and, in time, via electronic linkages and other kinds of connections with a variety of other sites, organizations, and institutions.