

'Making Missions Possible'

Long Beach Nonprofit Partnership Aims To Strengthen Community

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It is estimated that the number of nonprofit organizations in the Greater Long Beach area exceeds 12,000 – including more than 500 located in the International City. And while most offer direct services to those in need, these organizations sometimes need a hand up themselves.

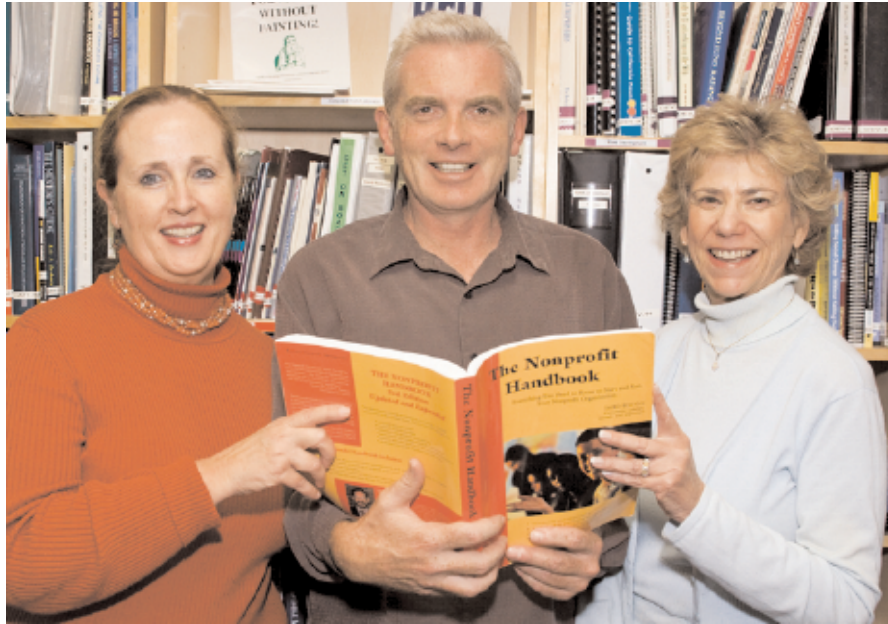
With just under 200 members, the Long Beach Nonprofit Partnership (LBNP) aims to “make missions possible” through strengthening nonprofits.

“Most people come into nonprofits because they’re passionate about a specific issue. . . . [They] come into nonprofits at the program level, but many times, they don’t have knowledge about management issues,” says LBNP Executive Director Judy Ross. “That’s where we come in.”

The management support organization was founded as a program of the Josephine S. Gumbiner Foundation and became an independent 501(c)(3) in 2000.

“We’re in a unique position to function as a nonprofit, with nonprofits. It really . . . helps us identify issues that nonprofits are experiencing because we’re experiencing them,” Ross says. “Because of the fact that we are a nonprofit, our board has always been very committed to best practices in terms of nonprofit management ourselves. If we don’t walk the talk, how can we be teaching these things? So we strive to be models of best practices, and because we are also in the trenches, we can quickly identify issues.”

LBNP provides the area’s only nonprofit resource library, which contains books and publications focused on manage-



The Long Beach Nonprofit Partnerships works to strengthen nonprofits in the Greater Long Beach area. From left are Membership Coordinator Christine Manvi, Director of Capacity Development Services John Glaza and Executive Director Judy Ross. (Photograph by the Business Journal’s Thomas McConville)

ment issues, as well as a database with more than 85,000 resources. The organization also offers year-round workshops that focus on issues such as board and fund development, strategic planning, marketing, information technology and financial management. Moreover, its Capacity Development Services Program provides a focused approach on specific projects, such as convening a board retreat or initiating a strategic planning process.

On November 4, for instance, LBNP will host “Don’t Just Sit There – Do Something!” to provide information about how to successfully raise funds during a recession. And on November 11, the organization will feature “Accounting for Non Accountants.”

LBNP’s four Affinity Groups, meanwhile, convene people who are in like positions: executive directors, volunteer managers, fund development professionals and board leaders.

“Many times, folks in these positions feel kind of isolated. They don’t really have a peer group that they can talk to about issues that they could be struggling with or some of the successes that they’re having that they can share with others,” says Ross, who has lived in Long Beach for 35 years. “I have the privilege of convening the executive directors’ roundtable, so that’s a great listening post to the pulse of what’s going on in the nonprofit community and what other executive directors are experiencing.”

Not surprisingly, a big question mark hangs over the nonprofit community as a result of the economic downturn.

“It’s very far-reaching in terms of nonprofits, and we all – in



Long Beach Nonprofit Partnership Executive Director Judy Ross and Director of Capacity Development Services John Glaza look on as Membership Coordinator Christine Manvi uses the organization's state-of-the-art database, which features thousands of funding opportunities. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Thomas McConville)

every sector – are wondering and kind of waiting [to see] how that will translate,” Ross says. “When resources are scarce, we also see a rise in service needs. So the resources decrease, and the needs increase in hard economic times.”

However, historically – and fortunately – philanthropic giving decreases just slightly during times of recession, Ross notes. Recent research conducted by the Giving USA Foundation, for example, notes that total giving dropped by no more than 5.4 percent in any given year between 1972 and 2002.

“People have called and asked us what they should do. What we’re recommending is number one, communicating. Let funders and donors know how you are, what your needs are. It’s amazing how generous the general public is,” Ross says. “On behalf of their constituents, they need to keep moving forward. We don’t want this to paralyze nonprofits.”

This is particularly important, she says, given that the benefits offered by nonprofit organizations go far beyond providing services. A 2007 economic impact study commissioned by the LBNP and prepared by Drs. Lisa M. Grobar and Joseph P.

Magaddino of California State University, Long Beach, reveals that more than six percent of jobs in Long Beach are related to the nonprofit sector, generating an annual payroll of \$459 million in the city.

“I talk to people frequently who are leaving the corporate world or leaving other sectors looking for something that they feel is really meaningful, that meets their passion, that they can really sink their teeth into,” Ross says. “And they’re looking for jobs in the nonprofit sector.”

In recognizing the significant role of the nonprofit sector in the economy, the LBNP is looking to expand its reach through education.

“We’re looking to see [how we can] work with the university and work with higher education in not only promoting careers in nonprofits, but also making sure that there’s really great development of nonprofit curriculum,” she says. “The workforce is going to look very different in 15 years than it does today. So what do we need to do today to ensure the viability and sustainability of our nonprofits for tomorrow?”

For more information about the LBNP, call 562/290-0018 or visit www.lbnp.org. ■