

## **Fundraising in Difficult Economic Times**

Presenters:

**Paul Downey, President/CEO of Senior Community Centers of San Diego**

**Sonja Brown, Recreation Manager, City of Healdsburg**

**Akila Gibbs, Executive Director, Pasadena Senior Center**

**Moderator, Sharon Monck, Advisory Council chair of the AAA of Napa/Solano and a Commissioner of the California Commission on Aging**

Paul Downey was hired to run Senior Community Centers of San Diego in 1995, leader in fight for affordable housing (developed Poticker Senior Housing 2005 and City Heights 2007), and in 2010 developed the Gary and Mary West Center in downtown San Diego—with unique design and programs. The organization provides comprehensive services in San Diego, transitional housing efforts a model for the rest of the country. Steering committee members, CA Seniors Economic Standards

Akila Gibbs raised public awareness of Alz Disease and research needs in southern California; healthy aging programs, collaborative relationships between government agencies and nonprofits. Worked 16 yrs on television news, and as communications manager for The Gas Company.

Sonja Brown was hired in 2005 as services and operations manager for Healdsburg Senior Center. She also volunteers for nonprofits in managerial capacities. Affinity for older adults, especially making a difference for those with dementia

**Paul Downey: an academic perspective on fundraising, communicating effectively with donors; the others will discuss specific things they have done; I'll do what takes a college quarter for me to teach at UCSD.**

Communicating your message is critical—how?

- In person
- Telephone
- Email
- Letters, the old-school way
- Social media—a growing way to communicate with younger donors
- Grant proposals
- Case statements

What goals do we have in common, is why s/he should donate—but what to communicate, and in what way to cause them to take action?

What do donors want?

- Recognition, feeling good, assurance of how their contribution will be used, making a difference.
- ROI—return on investment, but not in the venture capitalist sense—creating a social good,
- Truly making a difference
- To know their money is being spent where it does the most good

Whatever amount they give, they want IMPACT—not just knowledge that there is a problem, but how you are solving problems using their dollars

### *Logic Model for Fundraising*

(A mechanism for identifying impact—not specific to a type of organization—and can be for entire agency or a particular program within your org)

Input e.g., seniors are hungry or malnourished (data, or anecdotal)

Alerts that there is a problem, and identification of that problem

Activities e.g. feeding them, collaborating with hospital discharge brainstormed activities that could solve that problem.

Outputs - e.g., preparation and serving of meals

What you actually intend to do to solve the problem

But is this enough? Is this all there is to it? What if a senior eats only the dessert? This is not in my control, and the problem is not really solved as I intended

Outcomes - e.g., a senior eats the whole meal, or just the dessert

This the ultimate impact—outcomes might differ a great deal from intended outputs. I could report on the number of meals served, or number of clients seen—but there's something missing here.

Impact - e.g., a senior could buy a meal at McDonald's instead and not be hungry .

So what? That the meal was served? And that it was eaten?

We want data showing that the seniors are healthier—and then that there are further [secondary, downstream] impacts, such as being happier by avoiding LTC facilities. After all, vouchers to McDonald's would be cheaper for me to provide than a healthy meal—how specifically is the nutritious meal more effective?

Example: providing housing leads to reduced healthcare costs, happier people.

Shouldn't the impact be stated from within the community being served? Yes, but that's an outcome, a percent of the population served. What is the impact, what happened

because of that? This is what enables the donor to sense the return on investment for their donation.

This is just as with grant proposals—foundations want to see the evaluation piece, so that they understand impact. Articulating the move from “Outcomes” to “Impact” is the important [and often neglected?] step. If it’s an ongoing program already, you should be able to show this clearly enough.

### “Impact is Accomplishing Your Mission”

#### *Organizational Readiness*

Impact, support, and capacity have mutual overlaps. The overlap of all three is what you want—money coming in, ability to accomplish, and the means to do so.

You might lack organizational capacity, and this would be fatal to accomplishing your goals. You might lack (as 99% do) support—have great ideas and organizational capacity, but you need the means, the support. You might lack impact—have the support and the capacity, but you are just “chasing the money” without knowing what you are going to use it for.

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#### **Sonja Drown:** how we are making an impact in our particular community

Healdsburg is on the Russian River in wine country north of SF; 12,000 in the city, but serve area of 20,000.

The senior center and Friends of the Senior Center interact closely with the 1976 Healdsburg Museum—opened in a storefront at first as a city-owned museum. The Historical Society, a volunteer nonprofit, was started in 1977. In 1985, the first Senior Services Coordinator began working out of the back of the museum. In 1986, the museum moved to the old former library, and the senior center became its own self-sufficient storefront center (funding support from 1984 bond act). Had 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary open house and evening reception recently for the senior center.

Early 1990s, the city budget crisis dismantled the Parks and Recreation Dept, which owns and operates the senior center—but the senior center was saved by cutting funding to the museum. (Museum was taken over by the historical society and was kept operative with volunteers, endowment fund, and fundraising)

In 2003, the senior center was approached by historical society people on the Senior Services Advisory Commission (from the City Council), seeking to establish an organization

that would support the senior center regardless of city support (as they had done for the museum).

Healdsburg's center relies heavily on volunteers, as do all centers; so there was receptiveness, for outreach, enhancements, etc.—meeting short-term goals as well as long-term protection. So, the “Healdsburg Senior Center Volunteers, Inc.” became a nonprofit in 2005, and tends to be called “Friends of the Senior Center” (easier to remember, and distinguishes the group from the volunteers in general).

Meanwhile, the city was re-establishing the Parks and Recreation Dept. by using transit revenues, which was accomplished in 2006. The senior center was supported as part of that, so the immediate urgency was lessened.

So what were the shorter term goals of helping to serve seniors? Volunteers on the board could easily identify gaps in services, based on their experience of many years.

- Access regardless of income: Activity Assistance Program
- Can participate even if you cannot pay (confidential); such as transit
- Financial support beyond the normal funding
- Physical improvements to the facility and program support—e.g., the public computer center (small printing fee is all that is asked of users of the four computers), which serves a need for many but also brings younger older adults into the facility—a true impact, even if a side one! And new laptops for a computer class, so that it could be taught again after the old ones had bitten the dust

Hospitality and social events for the community

-Collaborating with Meals on Wheels, holiday gift baskets to support people whose families aren't in the area, so they feel connection at this time; reception of this was huge, for the volunteers as well as the recipients

-Mother's Day Tea, transforming the dining room for the mothers and adult daughters, finger sandwiches and desserts, dressed up and socializing at no cost

-Ice Cream Social and various special lunches, in collab with congregate dining program

-Senior Appreciation Dinner, annually saying thank you for their contributions to the community—and many people get involved helping with this as volunteers!

### Fundraising

-Senior Center Boutique, owned and operated by the center, with sales by consignment and of items donated by individuals and businesses

-Bingo program generates some revenue

-Memorial program

-Grants (though sources are in many cases drying up currently)

-Special events, piggybacking on citywide events for the past several years—such as “Celebrate Healdsburg,” the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the city, handling the T-shirt sales (netted thousands of dollars for the organization!)

#### The Friends and The Future:

Currently, there is support by the City Council and the city at large; but if the time comes that the city cannot or chooses not to fund the senior center, ongoing services are ensured. This is a partnership without which we would not be able to do much of what we currently do!

#### **Akila Gibbs:** Exploring the Relations Between Fundraising and Public Relations

I began as a news planner in TV news, coming up with stories good enough to air—so I was sent emails and telephone calls by so many people, and nonprofits got a lot of coverage (but they can use more) . . .and now I work for one, seeking coverage of it.

Public Relations is broader than marketing (your paid dollars)

It’s free, and educates/informs public about relevant issues

Move and influence people through news/media

Your opportunity to share your story with the public, which makes a difference

Why do people give?

Personal affinities derived from experience in their family

Wanting to give from understanding a particular issue/need

Wanting to make a difference

Seeing the major challenges faces by particular communities (e.g. Haiti quake)

Taking a stand on a particular issue

Often for a political reason

For personal recognition or benefits

Perhaps they are in a social group that gives in certain ways, and they want publicity

Giving since it's a good thing to do

Moral obligation to their church or university

Media coverage helps all of these!

What can PR do for you, then?

Raise and sustain awareness of a cause or issue: such as the rise in understanding Alzheimer's disease and breast cancer—free public media accomplished a great deal

Increase participation: seniors realizing they're not the only ones who need food, help for free, and they realize they don't have to be embarrassed to ask for help

Energize and keep donors/supporters engaged

Support fundraising

Generate financial gifts/donation: such as Trader Joe's donating for turkeys

How do you earn coverage? PR tools:

Inform: Fact sheets, to provide the basics of what you do, so you can provide it quickly

Press release, which you write for particular events—these get the attention of the press best if they are simple and factual—you don't need to spend much on these!

Town hall meetings, which you can gain (with invited media) in collaboration with others

Press conferences, if you have something really important to talk about (e.g., Alzheimer's disease going from #10 cause of death to #6)

Persuade and inspire: speeches, letters to the editor, guest column-writing, talk radio, newspaper editorials, board meetings

Multi-media: don't start it if you can't maintain it! Out-of-date websites or blogs are terrible things, so wait until you have a group of volunteers going that know what they are doing

It worked for the Alzheimer's Association regarding its Walks

Finding Funds:

Add communications to your grant proposals—if you don't include it, you don't have funds earmarked for PR efforts

Find corporate partners—e.g, May Co. for the Alzheimer's Association provided some of their ad space as a corporate donation

Identify friends who can help you write press releases, etc.

#### Ten Ways to get Free Publicity for your Nonprofit

- 1) PSA opportunities still exist with small cable channels, community radio
- 2) Look for community calendars published in your town
- 3) Contact your area's PR agencies, which may provide pro bono hours to help with your project
- 4) Contact community service organizations or seek interns from local colleges/universities
- 5) Ask local businesses to let you post flyers
- 6) Ask local businesses to allow links (small banner ads) to your website
- 7) Send press releases to local businesses—they may be looking for this
- 8) Use your own website or email blasts to self-promote
- 9) Keep a clipping file of the successes of other nonprofits—helps you get to know the local reporters, too
- 10) Your board members must be kept informed about everything, so can be ambassadors

Pick up the phone and call a television station! You might get them to send a camera crew if there is a hot-button issue afoot and your seniors are talking about it.

#### Examples of media coverage of Pasadena Senior Center

- Students interviewing seniors about what life was like when they were growing up; parents gave us a donation because they liked the story and the interactions going on.
- We had a hawk with an injured wing on our patio, and we managed to trap it between milk crates so the SPCA could take it. Once the hawk was better, we had a huge article in the LA Times, and many people remembered this and commented to me. The incident led to donations to the SPCA, but also them remembering us as a helpful and caring place—making current donors feel more proud than already do
- Our monthly food program partnered with a local food bank, but the need has doubled in size. I got somebody to come out to do a news story and this prompted a \$5,000 donation
- Later on, another paper was doing a story on food banks, and they remembered us as well as the food bank we partner with, and we were included in the write-up.
- A magazine was doing an article on senior living and wanted me to buy an ad, so I got them to come down and do a story on us as well

Keep your website updated—it doesn't have to be fancy, but must be current! First place a potential donor looks to check you out—and have a place online for them to donate

Our monthly newsletter highlights current funders

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Questions from attendees:

*For Sonja Drown*

*What ages served by Healdsburg computer classes?*

55+, but we don't card anyone, so long as there is room

*Do you charge a fee for classes?*

We are open to members and nonmembers (members, \$12/month, for newsletter and discounts, possibly members-only events coming up)

We pay our computer instructor, so we do charge a fee for that. After all, people place more value on it if they are paying—and it assures them that the teaching is high quality.

*Annual funding, how much from the city?*

We are small, so it's \$120K per year—two part-time staff, a program coordinator, a center assistant, and a small part of my salary as recreation manager (I also run our small transit agency). And we rely heavily on volunteers. This budget hasn't gone down yet in the current recession, so we feel fortunate.

*For Akila Gibbs*

*Do you emphasize your nonprofit status?*

Yes, I do, since otherwise people misunderstand how we operate; and that we are 51 years old

*Can a small nonprofit get publicity?*

Depends on where you are—in Orange? That's a sophisticated area, so decide what you want to get the publicity around, and make a plan

What is your biggest impact, which people should know about you? If you don't know, your publicity may not be informative



*For Paul Downey*

*Do you use YouTube to publicize your work or demonstrate outcomes?*

We made one video for the Pepsi Challenge, but the video took on a life of its own, and now people want to see something else . . . this demonstrates impact to our donors, but what else?

Also flip-cam videos, getting interview response from seniors and showing on Facebook or Twitter—two or three minutes, and your message can get across.

I focus on individual donors, talking to them and letting them know about their ROI in a way that reaches each of them individually

Then you have communicate back to them as impact actually occurs

Email regularly, between grant renewals

Direct mail focuses on the impact that is really occurring

You've got to know what you want to say when you find yourself getting to be on TV

*For Akila Gibbs*

*How to initiative partnerships with colleges, through service learning?*

Journalism or Public Relations departments—go right to the department chairs, and ask for the help you are seeking (and ask for older students)

*For Paul Downey*

*The down economy has us afraid to ask for money—yet I find they might be doing very well, even if not advertising it!*

Yes, remember to ask, and that you are presenting an opportunity to participate! You are providing something to them (and if you don't ask, you'll not have a yes ever)

*Gibbs: Establish “an environment of giving”*

*Would approaching community foundation be different from other potential donors?*

No, if anything, more so: the more sophisticated the decision-maker is, the more they will expect from you regarding your data to back up your claims of impact

Intuition, anecdotal evidence, and data—these are what you can provide!