

Nonprofit Membership And Board Issues

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lence in recruiting boardmembers is that many potential boardmembers are busy professionals who already have significant time commitments. "I'm working with a researcher who has gone back hundreds of years studying associations, and time pressures have always been there for people serving in a larger capacity [on boards]," Anderson said.

Robert Probst, executive director of the

Long Beach Rescue Mission, also pointed out that busy schedules often make it more difficult for nonprofit organizations to find boardmembers. "People these days are really busy, especially somebody who . . . brings a lot to the table," he said. "There have been a few people I have met in the community and I would love for them to be on our board, but of course most of the time when you meet somebody like that, they're already committed."

In Alexander's view, growing and maintaining nonprofit boards has been "an ongoing challenge" for decades. While in some

cases pursuing a boardmember for that person's name or stance in the community might be beneficial, in the long run, ensuring that boardmembers' goals match up with those of the organization's mission statement is more important, Alexander said. The idea behind that theory is, if a person's heart is in it, he or she is probably more likely to stick around and make some significant contributions to the organization.

Wilcox said that most potential boardmembers lose interest in staying involved if they are not being directly engaged in their organization's work in some way. "A

lot of people want to serve on boards today to really make a contribution. They don't want to sit in a closed room and just talk," he observed. This represents a shift in thinking from what boardmembers of past decades wanted, he noted.

"The key thing is, when somebody is involved [on a board], that they feel their involvement is contributing and is meaningful," Anderson said. "If you can provide that, you don't have challenges recruiting people. But if it is like a rubber stamp board . . . then it's probably harder to recruit," he explained. ■

The Long Beach Community Foundation: A One-Stop Shop For Charitable Giving

■ By SAMANTHA MEHLINGER
Senior Writer

Since it was founded in 1996, the Long Beach Community Foundation (LBCF) has served as a key community resource for charitable giving, benefiting nearly 60 local nonprofit organizations in just under 20 years. Last year alone, the organization distributed \$1.9 million in charitable grants. As Marcelle Epley, president and CEO of LBCF, put it: "The foundation is a one-stop shop for all charitable giving in Long Beach."

As explained on the foundation's website, a community foundation "is a tax-exempt charitable organization comprised of a group of funds established by individuals, organizations and businesses, and managed as an endowed pool of assets. Earnings on these assets are distributed in the form of grants to nonprofits in the local community."

As of February 2015, LBCF's assets totaled about \$26 million. "We are growing rapidly, and it is an exciting time for the community foundation," Epley said.

LBCF is primarily known in the Long Beach community as an outlet for creating donor advised funds, in which an individual gives a sum of money to LBCF and directs the foundation on how to disperse that money. "For the donor, it's an immediate tax benefit," Epley said. Essentially, this option serves as a simple alternative to creating a private foundation, she noted.

If a donor doesn't have a specific organization in mind, funds may also be established to benefit a field of interest – for instance, a fund could be set up to benefit charities focused on a specific cause, such as sexual assault prevention. Which organizations benefit from such a fund would be at the foundation's discretion. According to Epley, part of LBCF's role in these instances is to constantly stay on top of what organizations are doing within the community so that the foundation can make educated decisions about allocating money from these funds.

LBCF is quite flexible in the types of charitable giving it is able to facilitate.

"That's something we do struggle with a little bit as we continue to grow, is to get the word out about how flexible we can be and what the options are that can suit almost every need and lifestyle that's out there," Epley said. "Basically, we have programs that make giving easy. And it's whatever: if you want to set up a scholarship fund, if you are a nonprofit and you want to set up a fund that benefits you, or if you are an individual and you don't want to go through the headache of setting



The Long Beach Community Foundation's (LBCF) mission is to "initiate positive change for Long Beach through charitable giving, stewardship and strategic grant-making." One of the ways the foundation supports the local nonprofit community is by providing organizations with reduced-rent offices at its Nonprofit Center in Bixby Knolls. While currently fully occupied, the center also rents a meeting room, equipped with projectors and audio-visual equipment, for a \$50 flat rate to local nonprofit groups. Pictured in front of the Nonprofit Center at 3515 Linden Ave., are, from left: Tara Sievers, LBCF office coordinator; Marcelle Epley, president and CEO; and Colleen Bragalone, vice president. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Evan Patrick Kelly)

up your own private foundation and you want something easy."

An example of a scholarship fund through LBCF is one set up by Los Angeles County Supervisor Don Knabe to benefit children who were safely abandoned at regional fire stations through the county's Safe Surrender program. "We have a scholarship fund set up so that in a few years, those kids are going to have scholarships made available through Long Beach Community Foundation," Epley noted.

LBCF is even able to set up funds to support rewards related to solving crimes. "Another way the community foundation can be utilized is to get the bad guys," Epley said. "So let's say there is a murder and the police have a warrant for someone's arrest. What we could do is have people give to a fund that is set up specifically for that, and people could donate and then that reward could be given to whoever helps the police," she explained. "Not a lot of people know about that."

There are also options through LBCF for those who wish to continue making an impact or contributing to a cause after they die. According to Colleen Bragalone, LBCF vice president, it's as simple as denoting that you would like to contribute to a specific fund or endowment through LBCF in your will or trust. LBCF keeps corresponding documentation outlining any specific directions.

Endowments, which are assets invested over a long period of time to create income for a charity or cause, are also facilitated by LBCF.

For example, "You could set up an endowment where you have a chunk of money and you want a 5 percent payout to be taken off the top and go to Ronald McDonald House every year for the rest of time. We can do that," Bragalone explained.

Nonprofit organizations, such as the Arts Council for Long Beach, are also able to create endowments through LBCF to diversify their assets. "The only restriction is that it has to be a 501-c3, govern-

ment or education institution," Epley noted. These endowments, known as agency funds, may be used for anything ranging from charitable services to paying staff salaries. "They are granting back to themselves and it is creating a revenue stream for them," she said. LBCF currently manages 22 of these funds.

The foundation itself directly works to assist local nonprofits not only through its own discretionary grants to local organizations, but also by providing reduced cost services. LBCF provides affordable facilities and meeting space to local nonprofits at its Nonprofit Center, an office building located in Bixby Knolls. Local nonprofits rent office space there for below-market lease rates. Organizations seeking a temporary meeting space are able to rent out a room equipped with projectors, screens and audio-visual equipment for a \$50 flat rate.

Epley reflected, "If there is one takeaway, it is that we make charitable giving very easy, accessible and cost effective." ■