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innovative nonprofit SOLUTIONS

Message from Our President

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Our next e-newsletter will feature:

- Strategic Fund Development Planning
- Diversifying Your Funding Base
- Resources You Need

Our Mission: We help organizations create innovative solutions to build their capacity.

We accomplish this by assessing, designing and implementing strategic fundraising, marketing and management programs for nonprofits, community-based, faith-based and educational institutions and government agencies nationally.



Welcome to the Spring 2006 edition of the **Innovative Nonprofit Solutions E-Newsletter!**

Spring is a perfect time to reflect on what your organization has accomplished so far this year and to plan for what is yet to come. Even if your organization is not currently engaged in a formal self-evaluation, this is an ideal time to informally assess how well your organization is fulfilling its mission and fundraising goals for the year.

The INS Group is committed to fulfilling our mission to help nonprofits create innovative solutions to build their capacity. We continue to host effective grant writing and fundraising workshops and provide invaluable resources, such as CDs and resource development tools, to nonprofits. Our fall workshop calendar will be posted on our website at www.theinsgroup.com in August.

As spring is a popular time for nonprofits to hold their annual special events fundraiser, this edition of our e-newsletter features information essential for special event planning, including how to obtain favorable media coverage for your nonprofit and tips for publicizing corporate sponsors at your special event. It is never too early to begin planning your organization's special event for next year.

The Innovative Nonprofit Solutions E-Newsletter is an excellent resource for information about strategic planning, fund development, grant writing, and research for nonprofits. Contact us at info@theinsgroup.com to let us know what is important to you, and we will seek ways to help you become more informed on those topics.

- **Ruth A. Peebles**, President and Founder, The INS Group

How to Make it Special: Planning Your Next Special Event



Special events provide a unique opportunity to expand the constituency of your organization and market your organization and its mission. Special events are not only an excellent strategy for acquiring, retaining, or upgrading donors, but they help your organization build meaningful community relationships. Nonprofit organizations committed to capacity building and sustainability should host at least one special event annually to achieve fundraising goals, generate publicity, and raise visibility. The following steps will guide the planning of your organization's special event:

1. Select an appropriate and memorable event. Hold a non-judgmental brainstorming session at which board members, staff and volunteers provide initial input into what type of event to sponsor.

Consider several criteria in selecting an event: how the event will affect your organization's image, how the event relates to your organization's mission and fits into your overall fundraising plan, the amount of volunteer work and upfront money required, and the event's repeatability.

2. Develop a strategic plan.

Once you have selected the type of event your organization will sponsor, develop a specific plan of action to execute the event from beginning to end. The strategic plan should outline the amount of funds the organization wants to raise through the event, how the organization intends to raise it, and from whom the funds will come. The plan should also include specific strategies for recruiting and motivating volunteers, expanding the constituency of your organization, obtaining endorsements, and increasing media visibility of your organization throughout the planning and execution stages of the event.

3. Draft an event timetable.

Plan your special event at least

one year in advance, especially if this is your organization's first time hosting such an event. An event timetable includes every task that needs to be completed and a definitive deadline for completion.

4. Determine who will make the event happen.

The special event committee's role is to provide overall planning, secure corporate sponsorships, and determine the invitation list for the event. The committee will typically consist of one or more board members, one of whom should serve as co-chairperson or honorary chairperson. The committee should also include non-board members, such as current, past and prospective contributors, honorary members, and political and/or prominent community leaders. Designate a staff liaison to complete administrative tasks for the committee. Once the special event committee has been established, select subcommittee chairpersons to handle specific tasks. Potential subcommittees include corporate solicitation, logistics, speakers, auction, refreshments and entertainment.

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Fundraising Effectiveness

Personal Face-to-Face:
50-75% return

Personal Telephone with Letter Follow-up:
10-30% return

Direct Mail:
1-10% return

Special Events:

- Rate of return varies.
- High time costs.
- Break even on new events.
- Return depends on outreach.

Are you trying to determine the right event for your organization? Do you need assistance with evaluating your current special events?

The INS Group will help your organization choose the event that is a fit for your organization and assess and evaluate your current fundraisers. We will help your organization develop a timeline and action plan for implementing and coordinating a successful special event.

**Contact us today at
919-231-2870 or
info@theinsgroup.com.**

NC Coalition Against Domestic Violence Names Ruth Peebles As A Lead Consultant

Ruth Peebles, President and Founder of the INS Group, has been selected by the North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCCADV) to serve as a lead consultant for its Fundraising and Capacity Building Initiative (the "Initiative").

The primary goal of the Initiative is to radically diversify the funding streams, bolster the financial health, and increase the self-sufficiency of ninety local domestic violence and sexual assault agencies across the state of North Carolina.

Ms. Peebles will provide oversight and guidance for the overall implementation of the Initiative's fundraising and capacity-building plan. She is responsible for the research and development of the online training manual and will also organize and develop the curriculum for the training sessions for member agencies on how to build a sustainable and systematized fundraising program. In addition to the work associated with the Initiative, Ms. Peebles will lead the planning of the NCCADV's first signature event to be held in 2007.



The purple ribbon symbolizes support for victims of domestic violence. October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

"The INS Group has assisted us with corporate solicitation strategies, grant writing, grant research and general resource development strategies. The INS Group staff demonstrates professionalism in all aspects of their work. The services they have provided to the Center have been invaluable."

Evelyn Sanders
Executive Director
Southeastern Wake
Adult Day Center

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Making it Special

5. Develop a tactical plan for the utilization of event volunteers.

Create an organizational chart specifically for volunteers, as this will help to clarify roles and relationships between various players in the event organization as well as aid in recruiting. Hold a kick-off event where volunteers can select which subcommittees he or she would like to serve. As you recruit volunteers, make clear your expectations regarding their volunteer time.

6. Construct an event budget.

If this is your organization's first time hosting a special event, or if it is the first time your organization has hosted an event of this type, project conservative revenues and high expenses. Develop a preliminary budget which includes several streams of revenue. Revenue sources may include ticket sales (several pricing levels), raffle tickets, an auction, and corporate sponsorship. Expense items may include catering,

venue rental, entertainment and invitations. Be sure to secure as many donated services and products as possible. Once you have developed your event budget, your organization can analyze whether this event is worth hosting in terms of the projected income and rate of return. *See article entitled "Is This Special Event Worth It?"*

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Is This Special Event Worth It?

Special events can potentially:

- Be expensive.
- Require too much work for the amount of funds raised.
- Lead to unfavorable publicity.

Say "yes" to a special event when you:

- Are sure you can't lose money.
- Have a strong volunteer pool.
- Know the event will generate positive media attention.

Nonprofits and the News: Getting the Media Coverage You Need



The media is an excellent tool for improving public awareness of your organization's goals and activities. Media coverage builds community understanding and support for the vital work your organization provides to improve the lives of ordinary people. Such coverage garners new interest in your organization's mission and often attracts new donors. Following are some practical strategies for getting your organization media coverage:

1. Build and maintain meaningful relationships with reporters.

- Learn the names of the reporters who cover the stories most significant to your nonprofit. The happenings of your

organization may appeal to a health reporter or lifestyle reporter. The society page editor may have particular interest in covering your special event, especially if it involves prominent community leaders. Send the calendar page editor your event listings.

- Personally deliver or email press releases to specific reporters, rather than just to the "editor." Send press releases in the text of your emails, as attachments are often deleted due to concerns about computer viruses.
- Always invite the media to fundraising and other events your organization hosts.
- Ask a local television, radio or newspaper reporter to serve on your organization's board. As a board member, he or she can provide many PR and media resources.
- Send complimentary copies of your publications to reporters or the community relations director with your business card attached. Attach a personal note to direct him or her to some item in the publication that might be of particular interest.

- Always thank the reporter or media contact for coverage. Send a handwritten thank-you note or personal email, but do not send gifts.

2. Make your organization a useful resource for the media.

- Know your subject inside and out. Always be prepared to explain why your subject is important to the community, with specific examples and statistics, and what your organization is doing about it.
- Submit articles for newspapers, magazines, trade publications and newsletters to establish those affiliated with your organization as the experts in your field. Become the expert that reporters will call on for background, commentary and story ideas related to your organization and its mission.
- Take advantage of breaking news stories to promote your organization. Prepare key staff members to address specific issues related to your organization and to be available to the media.

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Does your organization have a public relations and marketing plan that supports your fundraising efforts?

Although most nonprofits recognize the benefits of generating positive media attention, they do not invest the time and energy required to enhance media relations. Contact the INS Group today to learn more about how to develop a public relations and marketing plan that supports your resource development activities.

**(919) 231-2870 or
info@theinsgroup.com**

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Domestic Violence Initiative

The Initiative will serve as a model for domestic violence agencies across the nation. To assist other domestic violence agencies in their efforts to build capacity and sustainability, Ms. Peebles will participate in State Coalition conference calls and provide technical assistance for State Coalitions nationally.

The North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence is a statewide nonprofit membership organization providing support services to local domestic violence agencies and allied professionals. The mission of the NCCADV is to create social change through the elimination of the institutional cultural and individual oppressions that contribute to domestic violence. The organization's purpose is to strengthen the network of people working to end domestic violence in North Carolina. For more information about the Coalition visit www.nccadv.org.

Ms. Peebles has more than nineteen years of hands-on-experience in fundraising and development, nonprofit management, grant writing and research, and project management. She is the creator of the workshops: *Grassroots Fundraising*, *The ABCs of Grant Writing*, *The XYZs of Grant Writing* and *Establishing an Effective Direct Mail Campaign*. She is an instructor for the Duke University Certificate in Nonprofit Management and an adjunct instructor for the Master of Public Administration Program at North Carolina State University.

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Getting Media Coverage

- Become reporters in your own office by providing reporters with good human interest stories. Encourage staff and/or volunteers at your organization to submit good story ideas that you might be able to "pitch" to the media.
- Look for photo opportunities to promote your organization. Local newspapers, television stations, and magazines are always looking for interesting

photographs. Contact the media with ideas, or submit your own photographs.

3. Know when and when not to contact the media.

- Restrict press releases to real news. Occasional, meaningful, appropriate news releases are more effective than frequent, weak ones.
- Only hold a news conference if you have something urgent and important to announce.

Make your news conference interesting by having visuals to illustrate how people will be impacted by your announcement.

The key to savvy media relations is understanding how to tailor the wants and needs of your organization with those of the media. With preparation and persistence, your organization can receive the media attention it deserves.

Do you know the first step to successfully securing a grant?

Find out by listening to our *12 Steps for Successfully Securing a Grant* CD.

This effective grant writing learning tool is now available for only \$10.

Visit www.theinsgroup.com to order yours today!

"After participating in the Grassroots Fundraising and Establishing A Direct Mail Campaign workshops, I designed a holiday appeal campaign that generated a significant increase in donor giving over previous years. While taking the ABCs of Grant Writing, I worked on a proposal to secure funding for two positions in our ministry. I used tips from the workshop as I wrote the proposal and received word that funding was approved."

Sharon Hayes
Presbyterian Prison Ministry

Making it Special

7. Develop a specific marketing plan. Events are excellent publicity-generating tools, as they give the media a reason to focus on your organization. Generating publicity means capturing an audience's attention through advertising and the event itself. Develop specific strategies for getting coverage in the local newspaper, on the radio, through speaking engagements, or even sponsoring a door-to-door campaign to increase the visibility of your organization.

8. Solicit endorsements. Securing corporate sponsors requires initial phone calls, solicitation letters, face-to-face

meetings and follow-up conversations. Offer as much as you can to entice corporations to sponsor your event, but only make commitments that you can deliver while staying within your budget. *See article entitled, "Ten Ways to Publicize Your Corporate Sponsors."*

9. Learn from this year for next year. The best events are those that become a tradition in your community. Do not abandon an event simply because the turnout was small the first year, or you did not achieve your fundraising goals. Conduct a comprehensive evaluation of your event so that you can improve upon the

planning and execution of the event for next year. In addition to measuring the fundraising success of your event, do not forget to assess the friend-raising success of the event and any positive publicity that resulted from the event.

The key to a successful special event is extensive planning and commitment from your board members, staff and volunteers. While planning a special event requires a lot of hard work, your organization will benefit greatly from the unrestricted funds raised and new friends made as a result of your special event.

Ten Ways to Publicize Your Corporate Sponsors

1. Display sponsor banner at event.
2. Display small sponsor banner or logo on podium.
3. Distribute sponsor products to event participants and other organizational constituents.
4. Include sponsor name or logo in organization's newsletter.
5. Display sponsor name or logo in advertisements about the event in newspapers and magazines.
6. Recognize corporate sponsor representatives at kick off events and press conferences relating to the event.
7. Add sponsor logo to organization's website and include a hotlink to sponsor website.
8. Display sponsor logo on T-shirts.
9. Provide category exclusivity to sponsor (a guarantee that once the sponsor signs on, none of their competitors will be allowed to sponsor).
10. Invite corporate sponsors to your event and recognize them at the event.

An Alternative Approach to Special Event Fundraising

Planning a special event may be challenging for your organization due to limited staff, time and financial resources. Your nonprofit may instead partner with a local civic organization or business to plan and host a special event with the funds raised donated to your organization. Build relationships with Rotary, Kiwanis, and Lions clubs, the Junior League, fraternities, sororities, and faith-based organizations, such as a women's group. A partnership with one of these organizations in hosting your next special event may be ideal for your nonprofit.

Look for Our Fall Workshop Calendar in August and Register for our Grant Writing and Fundraising Workshops at www.theinsgroup.com.