

Woodbury Bulletin

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Woodbury Community Foundation links nonprofits

Special to the Bulletin

Woodbury Bulletin - 06/11/2009

More than 40 Woodbury nonprofit leaders who traditionally compete with each other for volunteers, donations and publicity, spent Friday morning, May 29, deciding how they could work together instead.

Gathered to learn first-hand about the Woodbury Community Foundation's (WCF) (www.WoodburyFoundation.org) new initiative called "The Community Link," the audience represented Woodbury's nonprofit agencies, churches, schools and civic organizations.

Incoming (2009-2010) WCF board chair Dixie Ewing introduced The Community Link against the backdrop of the changing economic conditions.

"Every single person in that room has been experiencing the fall-out from this unstable economy," Ewing said. "We can't escape the fact that 'business as usual for nonprofits' is a thing of the past.

"Today, organizations must take a very critical look at what steps they can take to operate more efficiently so that they can provide a greater number of services with fewer dollars.

"Ideas such as collaborating with other nonprofits to attract volunteers. Cooperating on fundraising events. Joining forces to pay for administrative or technical costs. Sharing space. Even merging programs—all these concepts can make sense to keep our nonprofits healthy in this economy."

The Community Link will offer Woodbury's nonprofit leaders regularly scheduled forums for sharing ideas and collaborations. Guest presenters will offer topics—on collaboration, donor relations, fundraising and tax information—all information targeted to help Woodbury's donors see that their philanthropic dollars are being spent efficiently and effectively here at home.

"The Woodbury Community Foundation is like no other organization in our community," said Dick Krumm, 2008-2009 board chair, WCF board of directors. "Our purpose is to bring people together and to work on the community challenges that are bigger than single organizations can handle alone.

"The Community Link can be a clear demonstration of how the Woodbury Community Foundation can serve its community the best. I congratulate Dixie for her untiring work in putting this together and I look forward to the The Community Link's progress."

Building volunteerism is a community fundamental

Key presenter at the first Community Link forum was Valerie Jones, executive director of Community Thread (formerly known as Community Volunteer Services and Senior Centers).

Noting that a number of research studies have yielded intriguing findings about the health benefits resulting from volunteering, Jones said that "life satisfaction," a "personal sense of purpose," and "self esteem" are most frequently connected with people who volunteer.

Her comments resulted in an excellent discussion about ways that organizations could keep each other informed about their volunteer needs. A number of ideas are being discussed informally between and among organizations now.

"It may be effective for organizations to work together to recruit volunteers and share their services," Ewing said. "For example, those volunteers with web skills might be willing to work for two or three different organizations. Or one volunteer with a special skill might be willing to teach others who are volunteering for another organization.

“Talking to each other—being willing to share ideas. That’s the whole idea with The Community Link.”

The Community Link’s future

The Community Link’s next forum is tentatively scheduled for early in the fall. Representatives from any nonprofit, civic organization, city boards or commissions, churches, schools or civic groups are welcome to attend. Check the Woodbury Community Foundation’s website (www.woodburyfoundation.org) in August; the date for the next meeting and the location should be posted at that time. Reservations will be required.

The Woodbury Community Foundation connects donors who care about Woodbury with those organizations and leaders that are serving our citizens. The relationships we help build really matter for our community because they are the issues that no single organization or person can handle alone.

The foundation's capabilities and community linkages bring the people and organizations together who must work as partners to resolve conflicts, tackle issues or explore bold ideas.

When this happens, the WCF believes social capital is built for our children. Evidence points to the fact that a good stock of this “social capital” will translate over the long term into lower crime figures, better overall health, educational achievement and economic performance.