March 2009

fbh Foundation News

Stoking the Fires in a Chilly Fundraising Climate

What a difference a year can make. Last fall, stock markets were hitting record highs and optimism for the future was widespread. But now the picture is decidedly different.

Fundraising has weathered a number of historic recessions. But it's no surprise to anyone that the current climate for charitable fundraising—including at Fairport Baptist Homes—is the worst in years. Most people put philanthropy in the "discretionary spending" category, and they pull back if they're not feeling confident.

Across the country, nonprofit professionals report the lowest overall level of confidence in the fundraising climate for US charities in over a decade, according to the latest Philanthropic Giving Index (PGI) report released in December 2008 by the Center for Philanthropy at Indiana University.

Decline in Philanthropic Giving Index

The PGI, similar to a Consumer Confidence Index for charitable giving, is now 64.8, a 21.7% decrease from just six months ago and a 27% decrease since December 2007. In the ten years since the study began in 1998, the overall PGI has ranged from a high of 94.6 in December 1999 to a previous low of 72.3 in the summer of 2003. Higher scores indicate more positive or optimistic attitudes about the general fundraising environment.

The latest research shows that 93% of fundraisers nationwide report that the economy is having a negative impact on fundraising, including 28.5% who report a very negative impact, though different types and sizes of organizations have been affected in different ways. Human services and public benefit organizations are reporting the toughest fundraising climate, with health-related organizations reporting the least negative impact or holding their own. About 44% of fundraisers reported that giving by donors who had previously given less than $1,000 remained steady over the past year, with just under 30% actually increasing those gifts. Overall, pledge payments continue to be met by the majority of donors.

Fundraisers are reporting fewer successes in obtaining major gifts, though more success in securing planned gifts than six months ago.

Rebound Expectations

Even more sobering is the fact that economists expect a slow rebound, according to an article in USA Today (January 26, 2009). According to a survey of 52 economists conducted from January 15-22, 2009, the unemployment rate is expected to peak at 8.8% early next year, up from 7.2% in December 2008 and the highest since 1983. These economists predict that the economy won't return to a healthy, sustainable growth rate until 2011 or later and 42% believe that the recession will turn out to be the worst in postwar history, even if it turns a corner this year through anticipated increased consumer spending. Businesses are expected to continue to cut spending until early 2010, and the economic recovery will be slow and gradual, given continued strains in financial markets and fragile business and consumer confidence.

Challenges for Grantmakers

Even grantmakers are facing unprecedented challenges. In the 1990's, philanthropic endowments experienced dramatic gains and the expanded grantmaking that results benefited not-for-profits across the board. Now with a more than 30% decline in the US equities market, many foundations will have fewer grant dollars to distribute in 2009.

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FBH Caring Ministries Foundation

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Letter from the Chair

During nine of the ten years the FBH Caring Ministries Foundation has been in existence, I have had the privilege of serving on its Board of Directors, the past five years serving as Chair. The Foundation was initially charged with the mandate of building endowment funds and securing special need funding to undergird the Homes' financial sustainability and provide essential operating resources, given the increasing costs of health care delivery and inadequate public funding to support it. The "Hallways to Households" project of the 1990s had decimated Fairport Baptist Homes Caring Ministries' (the "Homes") reserve funds, leaving the Foundation approximately $200,000 upon which to build an endowment.

Resources for operating expenses were "loaned" by the Homes, allowing a greater percentage of receipts to fund endowment. Foundation Board committees in the areas of Finance, Investment, Marketing, Major Gifts, Board Development and Allocations provided a structure that enabled talented Foundation board members to work on achieving our mission.

Many accomplishments have been realized over the past few years, while I have served as Chair:

- Building endowment to a high of $1,375,000 as of June 2008.
- Securing $144,000 in a five-year renewable Governmental grant, making possible the NNORC /SOFI initiative.
- Securing $150,000 in a combination of Governmental grants and private Foundation funding to pay for the acquisition of a wireless telephone system for our skilled nursing facility.
- Providing in excess of $100,000 in grants to members of the Homes family for such purposes as parking lot lights, ceiling lifts for the skilled nursing facility, tub cuts for Deland Acres and Fairport Apartments, matching funds to meet grant requirements for governmental funding of NNORC/ SOFI and computers for Seasons Day Care Center.
- Fully funding Foundation operating expenses for the first time in 2008.
- Initiating the "Framing the Future" Capital Campaign and securing substantial private and grant funding for that endeavor.

While the Foundation has achieved great success, there remain significant challenges for the foreseeable future. Near the top of the list is achieving the $1,000,000 "Framing the Future" goal in one of the worst economic

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Chilly (contined)

Why is the economic well-being of grantmakers important for not-for-profits like Fairport Baptist Homes? As government funding for social programs decreases and individual donors are pressed for support, many non-profits turn to private and public foundations and corporate givers to fill the gap. When grantmaker assets decline, they have smaller funds to distribute in the form of grants to non-profits. They are less likely to increase funding or to add new areas of support to their portfolios, and are more likely to eliminate some grant areas entirely—at a time that their grant requests from strapped non-profits are increasing. In fact, among the 40 Upstate New York State grantmakers responding to an Economic Impact Survey conducted in 2008 by the Grantmakers Forum of New York, 31% decreased their 2008 grant budgets from 5% to 45% or more, expecting 2009 budgets to remain about the same, though 83% expect the volume of requests to increase in 2009. In 2009, 55% will make fewer, larger grants to non-profits, reducing the number of areas funded.

Strong Giving in a Struggling Economy

What can keep giving strong when the economy isn't? A 2008 study conducted by empty tomb inc. analyzed giving patterns among church members in recession years from 1968 to 2005. The results of their comprehensive analysis were surprising. Six recessions occurred during this time. In three of the recessions, giving among church members declined; in the other three, it increased. Giving also declined in four non-recessionary years during this period. What is the explanation?

We know that people make charitable gifts for any number of reasons—including the desire to help others, gain peer acceptance, satisfy a need for recognition, support their religious beliefs, express gratitude for services received, and save on taxes. Impediments to giving in an economic downturn may include concerns over unfulfilled obligations to provide support for children, parents, and others; fear of outliving one's resources during retirement years and/or not providing adequately for a spouse or other dependents; worry about business or other financial losses that could occur in the future; and concerns about catastrophic health problems or other disabilities that could necessitate expense care over an extended period of time.

The empty tomb inc. group found that internal factors, much more than external factors such as the economy, had the most impact on giving. And they reaffirmed that in a roller coaster economy, the best strategy for achieving success can be found in the basics of Fundraising 101.

Clear Vision the Key to Connection

A strong vision of ministry—or mission—is the one factor determining everything else—what the organization offers that affords people the opportunity to live beyond themselves. A compelling story describing how and what the organization does is the first step in engaging supporters, and in uncertain economic times, it is even more important to have a clear and focused mission. If you help people grasp their reason to live, their giving will follow.

Creating a partnership of service, where together you can change the community, helps people to see their gifts as mission in action. Where people share the vision, feel the urgency, and see the tangible results of their gifts, they feel the connection that inspires continuing support.

It is even more important now to be open and accountable. Donors want and deserve to know how their investment is going to be used, especially in a shaky economy. It is important to provide information about how gifts help fulfill mission, even if that includes talking about how continuing support for adequate overhead costs through annual fund donations are critical to running an honest and transparent organization.

How FBH Compares

In October 2008, a special Open Forum on Fundraising was held in New York City of senior development professionals from about 50 leading nonprofit institutions in metropolitan New York City to explore the current economic crisis. Focusing on immediate impact of the economy on fund-raising, continuing concerns, and strategies for the future, they identified a number of key findings. How does FBH compare to the implementation steps they outlined during their discussions? Here are their key findings:

• Develop a Short-Term Action Plan; Increase Activity; Open New Doors: The formation of the Foundation's Advisory Council in Fall 2008 and the implementation of the Foundation's planned Candlelight Dinners for the community in Spring 2009 are examples of the Foundation's efforts to develop and implement a plan to increase communication with donors and friends, redouble efforts to motivate staff and trustees, and remind them of the resilience of philanthropy in tough times as well as the necessity of increased research and prospecting.

• Focus on the Annual Fund: Economic anxiety may translate into lower annual fund gifts from those good, consistent donors who are the lifeblood we rely on, but paying attention to the "base" of the giving pyramid and being generous with thanks are the keys to survival in rough times. By doing just this, FBH Foundation was able not only to maintain, but even to exceed the annual fund goal ($50,000) in 2008.

• Explore Challenge Gifts: The Foundation has just announced a $15,000 Challenge Gift for the capital campaign from an anonymous donor, which will match new gifts of $1,000 or more (up to $15,000) to the Framing the Future Campaign. This challenge gift is designed to stimulate giving from others and to multiply the impact of their gifts.

• Share Philanthropic Information; Reaffirm Mission and Impact: Sharing current information to motivate leadership and to temper expectations is one of the purposes of this newsletter. Frequent briefings to trustees and donors represent FBH's efforts to share current

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Letter from the Chair

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environments of the last 80 years. We are currently halfway to our goal. While that accomplishment is significant, every effort must still be made to reach those who have not yet committed to support this project critical to the long term sustainability of Fairport Baptist Homes.

A second major challenge is to increase planned gifts to the Foundation while at the same time continuing to sustain and build our Annual Giving donor base.

The Foundation is fortunate to have a strong, dedicated and talented Board well equipped to handle the challenges which lie before us with Ellen Bevan as our leader. It has been an honor to serve as Board Chair and I am confident that the Foundation will continue its positive growth.

With gratefulness,

Paul

Paul A. Vick, Chair
FBH Caring Ministries Foundation

information and to keep leaders and donors honestly engaged.

Among the New York City Open Forum participants, annual fund-raising results for 2008 were generally comparable, or slightly better than, previous year's results, with gifts received earlier in the year helping to offset the impact of recent events.

In this area also, Fairport Baptist Homes Foundation compares favorably. FBH Foundation was able to exceed this year's annual fund goal of $50,000 by $6,667. This is especially meaningful since the "Framing the Future" Capital Campaign for the new assisted living community is being carried out concurrently, posing additional strains on already stressed donors.

FBH's diversified fund-raising program, strong donor cultivation strategies, increased communications and personal interactions with supporters appear to have enabled the Foundation to remain in a position this year to weather the storm. There have even been some outstanding recent examples of leadership giving despite the economic crisis.

Immediate Concerns Remain

Nevertheless, some immediate concerns shared by the Open Forum and FBH remain, as we move forward in 2009. Until the market exhibits noticeable improvement, there is still reluctance to solicit or even contact donors, as donors appear to be waiting for the market to stabilize to assess the crisis' impact on their personal situations. It is difficult to keep volunteers and even professional staff motivated. It is necessary to develop contingency plans in light of probable reductions in philanthropic support, and planned programs and events must be re-evaluated.

At the same time, increased outreach and activity, regardless of tangible results, is critical, to keep donors engaged and invested. Major solicitations must be done selectively, with fund-raising efforts perhaps best focused on trustees and past donors, bypassing requests to new prospects at this time. Most of all, reaffirming our mission and the long-term importance of our work is key.

The Magic Bullet?

At Fairport Baptist Homes, we recognize the significance of our economic crisis, its scope and scale. But we remain cautiously optimistic that our supporters share with us a belief in the importance of our work on behalf of the frail elderly who depend on us every day. We must maintain our energy in the coming months with new determination, increased activity, additional communications, and focused outreach, knowing that those who slow down or retrench in times of economic uncertainly lose ground to more competitive institutions when the economy recovers.

The magic bullet? There is no magic bullet, no way to ensure success in hard economic times. We know that people want to give, and that they remain attuned to our mission. We just wait for spring to dispel the chill of our current harsh economic climate.

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