

# MINNESOTA COUNCIL OF NONPROFITS

# Nonprofit News

Information and connections for Minnesota's nonprofit sector

Summer 2014

The mission of the **Minnesota Council of Nonprofits** is to inform, promote, connect and strengthen individual nonprofits and the nonprofit sector.



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## Nonprofit Bits

### New Retirement Savings Option

The U.S. Treasury's new retirement savings account called myRA (my Retirement Account) will be a simple and convenient way for employers to make retirement savings available for employees who don't have access to an employer retirement savings plan. The myRA program will begin rolling out later this year and offers nonprofit employees a simple, safe and affordable way to start saving. For more information, call (800) 553-2663.

## New Version of Principles and Practices Advances Leadership and Organizational Culture

Nonprofit organizations are different from business and government. One would reasonably expect to manage and govern them differently. However, in the absence of a general framework for nonprofit management, nonprofits are under persistent pressure to look like something else. On the one hand, nonprofits are advised to become more entrepreneurial and business savvy, orienting their organizations more closely to market forces. At the same time, organizations are urged to make increasing the reliability and accountability of their "outcomes" their highest priority, by controlling internal processes and structuring themselves as hierarchies.

In response to the pressures created by these outside forces, the Principles and Practices advisory committee decided to include a new principle on leadership and organizational culture and 19 related practices in the newest version of this standard-setting document.

"There is no shortage of leadership theories," said MCN's executive director, Jon

*Continued on page 3*

## Tireless Efforts from Remarkable Leaders Recognized

This past July, MCN joined with YNPN - Twin Cities, the Harvard Club of Minnesota Foundation and the Center for Integrative Leadership (CIL) at the University of Minnesota to recognize three nonprofit leaders with three distinct awards: Catalytic, Visionary and Transformational Leadership.

held various staff roles at PFund Foundation, including as the foundation's first full-time program staff person, integrating racial equity frameworks across the organization, increasing volunteer participation and engaging new institutional funding partners.



### Catalytic Leader

Alfonso Wenker is the Minnesota Council on Foundation's (MCF) director of diversity, equity and inclusion. Most recently, Alfonso developed a philanthropic fellowship program at the Bush Foundation now housed at MCF. Prior to his time at Bush Foundation, Alfonso



### Visionary Leader

Jodi Millerbernd is executive director of Boys & Girls Club of Rochester. She began her Boys & Girls Club career as an AmeriCorps volunteer and has held a variety of positions across the state. She now has over 15 years of Boys & Girls Club experience. Jodi is a progressive leader who has experience in developing stra-

*Continued on page 3*

### Statewide Expansion, Nonprofit SpecialIST, Customer Voice on Grants

By Jon Pratt, MCN executive director

Minnesota has one of the most robust and varied nonprofit sectors in the country, and that is true from rural counties to large cities. While cities have historically had resources and assistance available for people involved in nonprofits, organizations in other parts of the state have similar interests but less opportunity to develop their governance, funding, government partnerships and human resources.

MCN currently has chapters in northeast, central and southwest Minnesota with 544 members where we held over 45 learning events and briefings in 2013. Now, with timely support from the Blandin Foundation, this gap will close over the course of three years as MCN establishes two additional chapters in southeast and northwest Minnesota.

Proximity counts for a lot. With this support, MCN will for the first time, be able to have a permanent presence and point of contact in each region of Minnesota. We are gratified to be establishing a regional office in Rochester this fall after several years of discussion and in northwest Minnesota in 2015. MCN staff and board members will soon hold a series of meetings with nonprofit leaders in each of these regions to identify priorities and plan activities.



#### Nonprofit SpecialIST: An Advantage for Client Organizations

One of MCN's long-term goals has been to support the development of professionals and businesses that have a deep understanding of nonprofit management, finance and legal structures that nonprofits receive the most suitable advice and services. While a brand-new attorney or CPA might learn a great deal from their first nonprofit incorporation or IRS Form 990, experience has shown that subject matter expertise is a major advantage to get the desired result. As a result of the different laws and practices of the nonprofit sector, it is usually in the interest of client organizations to hire professionals with a nonprofit focus, since that specialization equips them to be quicker and better grounded in the experiences of multiple organizations.

This is the essence of MCN's relaunched online service, the Nonprofit SpecialIST. As one might expect, Minnesota has a fully developed and comprehensive set of service providers that have grown up alongside Minnesota's nonprofit sector, many of whom speak at MCN trainings and work closely with MCN members. Like Trip Advisor or YELP, the Nonprofit SpecialIST shares information from customer experiences through ratings and comments. We encourage our members to nominate a vendor to be listed on the site and then rate and comment on their experience.

#### Learning from the Customer Voice on Grantmaking

In the same way Trip Advisor and YELP aggregate and share feedback on travel and restaurant experiences, a number of projects are tapping nonprofits' experience with grantmaking organizations. The pioneer in this area, the Center for Effective Philanthropy based in Boston, has surveyed grantee experiences with major foundations and showed this feedback privately with foundation managers. Two new projects have been launched to gather responses on foundation performance:

- insidephilanthropy.com, a subscription-based website in New York which urges users to rate and review funders and program officers to "speak truth to money;" and
- Philamplify from the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy (NCRP), combining expert assessments and community feedback to "generate honest feedback to improve philanthropy," starting with a 40-page analyses of five foundations, including the California Endowment and the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation.

MCN is in conversation with The California Association of Nonprofits and the website Great Nonprofits about creating a comparable experience-sharing site for nonprofits about local and state funders. Please let me know if you have an interest in this area by contacting me at [jpratt@minnesotanonprofits.org](mailto:jpratt@minnesotanonprofits.org).

## Principles and Practices Advises Leaders to Champion the Cause Inside and Outside the Organization

Continued from page 1

Pratt. “The challenge for the nonprofit sector is to identify the practices particular to the situation faced by nonprofits, and that will help them achieve their potential.”

The new Principle and related practices reads:

Nonprofit organizations benefit from broad participation in important discussions and decision-making. By engaging diverse groups of people who care about the organization’s work and the people it serves, from perspectives inside and outside the organization, nonprofits are able to mobilize support, learn from peers and respond to community concerns. Nonprofit leaders have a complex task, carrying out challenging missions with limited resources and sometimes conflicting demands, in the midst of constantly evolving networks of organizational and personal relationships. Open and interactive leadership practices and organizational cultures strengthen the ability of nonprofits to interpret and adapt to opportunities in this shifting environment and to make the most effective use of the ideas and resources available in their organizations, networks and communities.

- Nonprofit leaders should devote time and attention to analyze the changing environment and steer the organization through those changes.
- Nonprofit leaders should prioritize organizational goals and negotiate external relationships to buffer against excessive control of the organization by funding sources, government regulators or other external influences.
- Nonprofit leaders should recognize and navigate the organization’s response to the sometimes competing interests of funders, clients, constituents, the board, the public and volunteers.

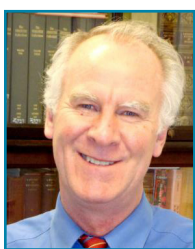
- Nonprofit leaders should discern a sustainable business model for the organization that takes into account the organization’s size, focus, funding sources and activities.
- Leaders should advocate for their organization and its mission, championing the cause in and outside of the organization.
- Leaders should actively communicate how the organization’s activities produce the intended change in the community and inspire others to affect that change through fundraising, advocacy and programming.
- Nonprofit leaders should create and sustain an organizational culture that best advances the nonprofit’s mission and goals.
- Nonprofit leaders should push the organization to make difficult and timely decisions, challenge others in the organization when necessary, and permit conflicting views to be expressed on the way to reaching resolution.
- Nonprofit leaders should foster a culture of information sharing and interaction between the board and others in the organization so that innovation and creativity can come from diverse parts of the organization.
- Nonprofit leaders should demonstrate the behaviors they expect of their colleagues.
- Nonprofit leaders should pay attention to and attend to their need for professional and personal renewal and encourage the same in others.

A full version of MCN’s newly revised *Principles and Practices for Nonprofit Excellence*, including all 19 Leadership and Organizational Culture practices, is available online at [www.minnesotanonprofits.org/principles-practices](http://www.minnesotanonprofits.org/principles-practices).

## MCN Recognizes Catalytic, Visionary and Transformational Leadership

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tegit investment initiatives; connecting community resources; and developing staff to achieve objectives and reach their full potential. She is dedicated to maintaining an organizational reputation built on mission driven service and uncompromising ethics.



### Transformational Leader

Patrick Coleman has been the acquisition librarian at the Minnesota Historical Society for 35 years. In that curatorial position he has been responsible for adding approximately 100,000 volumes to the library, making it the premier place for scholarship on all Minnesota topics. Patrick writes and lectures on topics of Minnesota’s culture and history. He served as the president of the Library of Congress’s Minnesota Center for the Book, presided over the Minnesota Book Awards, sits on the boards of Coffee House Press and the Minnesota Center for Book Arts, and received the Kay Sexton Award for contributions to Minnesota’s community of the book.



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## Is the Work Ever Done? Sometimes, It Is.

What happens when a non-profit organization achieves its mission? Sometimes they then adjust their focus, as in the famous historical case of the March of Dimes, which shifted its focus from polio (a problem that had been solved) to a broader mission including a wider range of disabilities. Sometimes they close their doors, often celebrating goals achieved and work done. In June, one Minnesota nonprofit, Project 515, did just that.



Founded in 2006, Project 515 had a very specific mission. Based on legal research, its founders concluded that Minnesota had 515 laws that treated same-sex couples differently than married, heterosexual couples. It set out to change these laws to provide equality for Minnesota's couples and families based on a belief that all couples and families deserve the same treatment under the law, regardless of sexual orientation. This belief drove Project 515's work until 2011, when the question changed.

In 2011, the Minnesota legislature put a proposed constitutional amendment to permanently limit marriage to one man and one woman on the ballot. Project 515 immediately changed focus to put all efforts into defeating the "marriage amendment" which would be before voters in November 2012. After prevailing in that effort, its focus shifted changed once more to advance marriage equality in Minnesota during the 2013 legislative session. When marriage became available to same-sex couples in Minnesota on August 1, 2013, the 515 laws that treated same-sex couples differently than married couples ceased to exist.

On June 30, the organization closed its doors, able to declare mission accomplished. Project 515's story provides a clear example of many stages of an organization's lifecycle: a law based on a research-based community concern; early efforts to address a problem; shifted priorities as the landscape changed; substantiated growth to address ongoing challenges; building strong partnerships in the community; gaining specific results which make clear that a mission has been achieved; and a strategic dissolution to a historic tenure.

"To have undertaken such an ambitious mission, and to have found success, is something the board and staff of Project 515 will always be so proud of," said Jake Blumberg, Project 515's former executive director. "Thanks to the work of thousands of people across the state, Minnesota now treats same-sex couples and their families equally under the law—what a mission to accomplish!"

Although it is rare for an organization to close because they have achieved their mission, Minnesota now has a clear example of one that has done so in a time when the issue of their concern is undergoing significant societal change. MCN commends Project 515 for their important work on the issue of equality for same-sex couples and congratulates their former board and staff on the success that allowed them to close their doors.

### Engage and Encourage Your Communities to Vote

By Susie Brown, MCN public policy director



For the last decade, MCN has developed and implemented a strategic focus on voter engagement. As the midterm election rolls around this November, MCN hopes your nonprofit organization augments your work with activities that encourage voters to engage in this simple and critical form of democratic participation, particularly those who are disenfranchised or low-turnout populations.

Nonprofit organizations are in unique positions to encourage voter turnout, as institutions that have close relationships and deep trust within the community, without advancing a partisan political agenda. As nonprofits, we play a critical role to be a unbiased and non-partisan community resource that can serve as a catalyst for increased civic participation.

Over the past decade, Minnesota's nonprofits have carried out nonpartisan voter engagement in a variety of effective ways. Just to name a few examples: Courage Center has assisted the disability community by providing rides to the polls. The Family Partnership has offered voter registration in their waiting rooms and voting reminders in their communications with clients. The YWCA of Minneapolis has conducted candidate questionnaires. The Arc of the Twin Cities has held meet-and-greet picnics with candidates. Jewish Community Action, with several partner organizations from the Jewish community, held a 2010 gubernatorial candidate forum. MCN has had the pleasure to be a part of these activities, collaborating with local nonprofits and providing the information and tools necessary for successful voter engagement activities.

What voter activities would be most effective in your community? If the people you serve are likely to be new voters, perhaps a voter registration drive would be beneficial. If your community seeks information about who is running, an event for the public to meet and hear from candidates might be a good strategy. Do the people you serve need a reminder or a ride to the polls? As nonprofits, we play a special role in providing information, access and assistance without an agenda.

Please join MCN for a webinar on September 11 called "Elections! The Role of Nonprofits" and for activities related to National Voter Registration Day on September 23. MCN also has a small pool of resources available to nonprofits in need of modest financial support for election-related activities. These "mini-grants" of up to \$200 will be available on a first-come, first-served basis. More information about both of these events and the mini-grants can be found at [www.minnesotanonprofits.org](http://www.minnesotanonprofits.org).

MCN believes that nonprofit organizations have a critical role in democracy. Our origins are in community participation where people stand up for what they believe in and come together to make a difference in the world through acts of civic engagement. Voting is an important part of this and nonprofits can and should encourage this activity in their communities. Let's work together toward a Minnesota where all voices are heard.

### UST Gives More than \$8.7M in Cash Back to Nonprofits

MCN has partnered with the Unemployment Services Trust (UST) since 1990 to help members lower the cost of unemployment insurance at their nonprofit. Founded by nonprofits for nonprofits, UST is a grantor trust, owned by its members, that has spent the past 30 years helping members carefully manage their claims costs through ongoing education, expert claims management and reserve building. Over the next several weeks, UST will provide 521 nonprofits a combined \$8,762,873 in cash back. Of those funds, 39 of MCN's members will receive a total of \$637,350 in cash back this year.

The UST program—which is available to nonprofits with 10 or more employees to help control unemployment-related HR costs—includes an annual review of its 2,000+ nonprofit accounts using an advanced actuarial model.

Unlike the state unemployment tax system or private insurance where taxes and premiums cannot be refunded (even when benefits paid out are far below what the employer paid in), UST instead allows for cash back when an organization has a positive unemployment claim experience.

UST member nonprofits whose claims were lower than anticipated and that are well-funded for future claims will receive a direct refund or credit to their organization.

By aiming to ensure that a nonprofit is properly reserved for unemployment claims costs but not holding excess funds beyond the necessary cushion for future claims, UST helps serve its mission of "Saving money for nonprofits in order to advance their missions."

To learn more about the UST program for 501(c)(3) employers, visit [www.ChooseUST.org](http://www.ChooseUST.org) or call (888) 249-4788 to speak with an unemployment cost advisor.

## Nonprofit Awards and Advancements

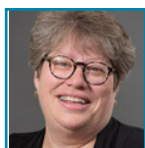


**Kathy Mock** has joined **Animal Humane Society** as chief government affairs and community engagement officer.

**Hammer Residences, Inc.** was named one of the **Top 100 Workplaces in Minnesota** according to an employee-based survey from the Star Tribune and WorkplaceDynamics.

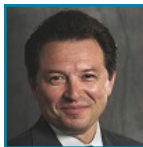


**AARP Minnesota** appointed **Jim Scheibel** to the position of president – the highest state-level volunteer position within the organization.



**Liz Richards**, executive director of **Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women (MCBW)**, received Macalester

College's Distinguished Citizen Award which recognizes alumni who have exercised leadership in civic, social, religious and professional activities.



The **Family Partnership** named **Jerry Uribe** as its chief operating officer.

**Gary Schiff** has been named president of the **Council on Crime and Justice**.



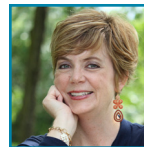
**AccountAbility Minnesota** has changed its name to

**Prepare+Prosper** in response to its expanded work and deeper focus on improving the broader financial lives, well-being and futures of low-and moderate-income households.



**Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative** hired **Anne Mavity** as the director of new projects to lead its supportive and affordable housing development team.

The State Chapter of Minnesota Business Women recognized **West Central Industries** as its **Business of the Year**.



**Opportunity Partners** welcomed **Katie Nelsen**, CFRE, as its chief advancement officer.

**Sherry Ristau** has retired as president/CEO of the **Southwest Initiative Foundation (SWIF)**. She has been employed over 20 years at SWIF, including the last 17 as president/CEO.



**Wayside House** named **Karina A. Forrest-**

**Perkins** as its executive director and **Dan Ursin** as its director of finance and administration.

**MPIRG** announced **Ryan Kennedy** as executive director. Ryan will continue to carry forward the powerful work of building the next generation of leaders to affect real world policy change.



**Minnesota Environmental Fund** hired **Cordelia Pierson** as its executive director.



**American Public Media Group (APMG)** named **Sylvia Strobel** as senior vice president and general counsel.


**MacPhail Center for Music** received two awards for recognition in arts accessibility and innovation: **The Sally Ordway Irvine Award** by the Ordway Center for Performing Arts and the **Eureka! Award** by the Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal.

### Submit Your Announcements

Visit MCN's Sector News at [www.minnesotanonprofits.org/sector-news](http://www.minnesotanonprofits.org/sector-news). Member organizations are invited to submit your organization's awards, staffing announcements and other news to [mcharleston@minnesotanonprofits.org](mailto:mcharleston@minnesotanonprofits.org).

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## Giving "Out in the Field" a Whole New Meaning: Farmer's Legal Action Group

Farmers' Legal Action Group (FLAG) is a nonprofit law center that provides legal services to family farmers and their communities. In Minnesota, FLAG's anti-racism work in agriculture has focused on the state's community of Hmong American farmers who, despite their prominence in local markets, continue to face discrimination and barriers that exclude them from economic opportunity.



farmers were not contacted before the ordinance was passed.

Out in their fields, farmers were briefed on their rights and worked with FLAG to find a resolution to preserve their livelihoods. Speaking with members of the Township Board, FLAG arranged for pro bono counsel and initiated settlement discussions that would ultimately persuade the Township Board to not only to repeal the ordinance, but also to engage in a dialogue with the Hmong American farmers to increase the Township's understanding of their livelihoods and farm operations.

In 2013, FLAG was awarded the Non-profit Mission Award in Anti-Racism Initiative for its advocacy on behalf of Hmong American farmers. Earlier that year, more than 30 immigrant and refugee farm families who had recently started growing vegetables on 110 leased acres in Washington County's May Township faced a crisis. Their crops, set for sale at the region's farmers' markets, represented significant portions of their livelihoods. However, the Township Board enacted an ordinance that imposed onerous restrictions and fees on vegetable farmers. The ordinance did not apply to neighboring farmers, who were not Asian, and Hmong American

FLAG's work helped to preserve \$300,000 in income for the refugee and immigrant families and secured the ability for the same families to farm that acreage again in 2014.

FLAG has helped and continues to help transform a silent and struggling farming community into important and productive community contributors. For more information on FLAG and its recent activities, visit [www.flaginc.org](http://www.flaginc.org).

## WESA: A Wealth of Opportunities for Nonprofits

*By Barbara Battiste, Director at the Legislative Office on the Economic Status of Women*

MCN's last Nonprofit News reported on the responsibilities that nonprofits as employers have under Minnesota's new Women's Economic Security Act (WESA). WESA also offers opportunities to help nonprofits achieve their mission.

### Grant Opportunities

WESA provides \$500,000 in FY 2015 for grants to increase the number of women in high-wage, high-demand nontraditional jobs. Eligible grantees include community-based organizations experienced in serving women, secondary and postsecondary education institutions, workforce and economic development agencies, apprenticeship programs, and programs that encourage young girls to enter these types of occupations. Low-income women and women age 50 or older are special targets of this grant program. For further information, contact the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development at 651-259-7114.

### Employer Opportunities

WESA provides \$250,000 to the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry to support women in apprenticeship programs in high-wage, high-demand, nontraditional occupations. If your organization is interested in having an apprentice, or if you serve businesses that may be interested, a FAQ sheet is available at [www.dli.mn.gov](http://www.dli.mn.gov).

For more information on WESA, including a summary of the WESA provisions signed into law in 2014, please visit [www.mnwesa.org](http://www.mnwesa.org).

2014 OPEN HOUSE



I-DAY EVENT

September 18, 2014  
10:00am - 4:00pm

MINNCOR Showroom  
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**Update your record with MCN:**  
by emailing MCN at [info@minnesotanonprofits.org](mailto:info@minnesotanonprofits.org).

## MCN Launches New AmeriCorps VISTA Program

The Minnesota Council of Nonprofits is pleased to announce it is now an AmeriCorps VISTA program sponsor with the help of the Corporation for National and Community Service. The goal is to strengthen, inform and connect nonprofits working with immigrant and refugee communities and communities of color to overcome the multiple determinants of poverty.

In its first year, seven AmeriCorps VISTAs will be strategically placed with capacity-building organizations, including:

- **Matthew Berg, Diversity Program Specialist, MAP for Nonprofits**  
Matthew will develop program and materials for immigrant organizations and organizations of color to increase their capacity through access to and utilization of board development, training and consulting services.
- **Amalia Centurion, Emerging Nonprofit Specialist, MCN**  
Amalia will develop and lead capacity building training and resource program for organizations serving immigrant and refugee communities and communities of color in Minnesota.
- **Giselle Efon, Community Engagement Program Associate, Nexus Community Partners**  
Giselle will support community based organizations along the Blue Line Light Rail to identify and implement community-powered solutions for equitable and healthy communities.
- **Kate Fridley, Program Development Specialist, Nonprofit Assistance Fund**  
Kate will develop and increase NAF's capacity, skills and cultural competence to be able to serve culturally-based nonprofit organizations effectively and with meaningful outcomes.
- **Samantha Holte, Development Outreach Specialist, Hispanic American Center for Economic Research**  
Samantha will be a key team member, working with the executive director, board members, staff, and members of other community based organizations will support the development of internal policies and procedures and external relationships.
- **Dana Jaehnert, Entrepreneurs of Color Program Development Coordinator, LegalCORPS**  
Dana will form joint training programs with other nonprofits or agencies that support successful small business development among immigrant and other ethnic minority populations.
- **Wayne Lee, Inclusion and Engagement Resource Specialist, MCN**  
Wayne will expand MCN's communications and research capabilities to deliver resources that are accessible and helpful for organizations serving communities of color – with a focus on immigrant communities in Minnesota.

Thank You Socials in St. Paul, Duluth, St. Cloud and Mankato  
[www.minnesotanonprofits.org/member-appreciation-month](http://www.minnesotanonprofits.org/member-appreciation-month)

Member Appreciation Month  
August 2014