

Inside this issue:

President's Message . . . . . 2

Philanthropy Collection News . . 3

Awards Luncheon Honorees . . . 4

Blasts from the Past. . . . . 6

Member News . . . . . 7

Building Our Membership . . . . 9

Scholarships . . . . . 9

PhilanTopic Resources . . . . . 10

Save These Dates . . . . . 12

Spotlight Feature

Feeding America . . . . . 5



Michelle and her daughter receive nutritious food from a local food pantry.

WSPN mission:  
Offering support to development professionals and advancing philanthropy since 1986.

A Graphic Re-visioning of Nonprofit Overhead

By Curtis Klotz, CPA

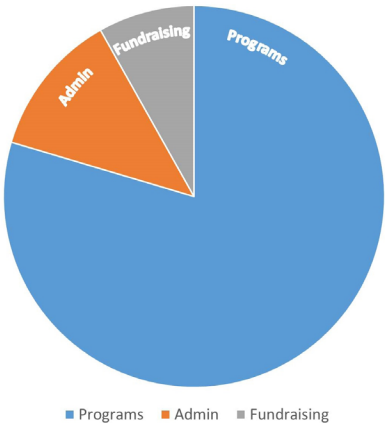
A Blog in Pictures (and some words, too)

Most nonprofit leaders agree that we need a new way to communicate about the true costs of our programs and the vital importance of strong organizational infrastructure. But we have not yet developed a simple, consistent message when sharing our view with potential supporters and investors. We are stuck with old terms and old images.

The following series of images and descriptions is really a blog in pictures. How we visualize our understanding of nonprofit structure and programs shapes the overhead debate. It's time to get graphic about our new ideas—to deploy fresh images to help educate ourselves, the public and our funders.

It's Time to Retire This Pie Chart

A Tired Old View of Our Organization



When nonprofits are viewed this way, no matter how hard we try to think differently, we imagine important infrastructure of our organization as taking a slice out of

(continued on page 8)

The Seven Cardinal Rules of Fundraising Writing

By Jeff Brooks

Fundraising is a funny profession. It requires you to learn a specific style of writing that's unlike any other you're likely to have learned—such as business writing, journalism or grant writing.

But if you go to the trouble to learn the conventions of fundraising writing, donors will reward you with more gifts. Larger gifts. And they'll stay with you longer.

Here are seven cardinal rules of fundraising writing—seven principles that will make your work more effective. You'll find a detailed discussion of the points I make below in my books, *The Fundraiser's Guide to Irresistible Communications* and *How to Turn Your Words into Money*.

1. The Importance of Being Urgent

Man down! It looks like a heart attack. You spring into action, knowing a life may be at stake.



(continued on page 10)

### **WSPN mission:**

Offering support to development professionals and advancing philanthropy.

### **WSPN core services:**

EDUCATION, NETWORKING and ADVOCACY

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We invite your membership. Annual, non-transferable dues are \$40. Register online or make checks payable to West Suburban Philanthropic Network and mail to:

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## **President's Message**

### **Community**

We recently revised our values at Northern Illinois Food Bank to reflect our current culture and our evolution over the past few years. Affectionately called Values 2.0, we strived to take traditional words like teamwork, innovation and excellence to the next level. I believe one of the new values we selected that does a good job of encompassing the Food Bank, our team and our work is *community*.

Our definition is we collaborate with our team and partners to help serve our neighbors. What I love best about that statement is *collaborate, partners* and *serve*. The missions of nonprofits vary greatly, but at their core, we are all serving someone. We cannot serve our clients without collaboration and without support from partners throughout the community.

Working in the nonprofit field in the western suburbs for nearly ten years now, I am amazed at the tremendous supporters in our area. These are everyday people who believe we all share in the responsibility of creating a healthy community for ourselves and future generations.

As part of our 15th Annual Philanthropy Awards Luncheon, we honor just a few of these outstanding members of our community, and you will find the 2017 honorees listed on page 4.

It was a very difficult process to select from a deserving pool of candidates. I was blown away by the generous spirit, strategic leadership and countless hours of time given by our nominees to support nonprofits in the western suburbs. Philanthropy is about more than just money, and the dedication and impact of our honorees is evidence of that.

While we are only able to select one winner in each category, the real winners are the nonprofits whose missions are made possible through their support, and



in turn, the neighbors served. I hope you will all be able to join us on Tuesday, May 23 at the Embassy Suites in Naperville to recognize these pillars of our community and celebrate their profound impact.

Tickets are \$50, sponsorships are available and there is an opportunity to bring and thank your outstanding volunteers.

The awards luncheon is one of my favorite days of the year when we as fundraising professionals can do our small part to thank the partners that make our work possible. As we gather this year, let's take a moment to appreciate our community and remember we are all here to support our neighbors.

Respectfully,

Maeven Sipes

# Philanthropy Collection News

## CFRE Exam

By Christine Kickels, Librarian  
College of DuPage's Philanthropy Collection

**T**he Certified Fund Raising Executive (CFRE) is a globally recognized certification in the fundraising field. This practice-based designation requires both an application and a written examination.

If you have intentions to take the exam this year, plan on a visit to the College of DuPage Library as you prepare. Although the test is not meant to be an assessment of your knowledge of literature, it is recommended that applicants review resources that cover the six CFRE knowledge domains that include *Current and Prospective Donor Research*, *Relationship Building*, *Securing the Gift*, *Volunteer Involvement*, *Leadership Management*, and *Ethics and Accountability*.

We have all of the recommended books on the resource reading list provided by CFRE International. All books circulate for 28 days. Select titles to start with include:

- **Achieving Excellence in Fundraising**, 4th ed. (2016) by Eugene R. Tempel, et al.
- **Fundraising Basics: A Complete Guide**, 3rd ed. (2009) by Barbara L. Ciconte and Jeanne Jacob.
- **Strategic Fund Development** (2011) by Simone Joyaux.
- **Ethical Fundraising** (2008) by Janice Gow Pettey.
- **Donor-Centered Planned Gift Marketing** (2011) by Michael J. Rosen.

The Philanthropy Collection is located on the upper floor of the Library and is open to the public. If you live or work in DuPage County you are also eligible for a College of DuPage Library card so that you can borrow materials.

**Our next FREE workshop on "Finding Grants" is at 1:00pm Friday, March 17.** If I can help you become more familiar with our nonprofit resources, please contact me at (630) 942-2313 or kickels@cod.edu. ●



## Committee Chairs

### Awards Luncheon chair

#### Jessica Noe

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West Suburban  
**Philanthropic  
Network**



## Editor's Note

Dear *Cultivate* readers:

**A**s we prepare to recognize this year's slate of honorees at our 15th Annual Philanthropy Awards Luncheon, we reflect on the contributions of all those passionate individuals who make our organizations thrive and prosper.

Please join us in recognizing these honorees' contributions and reflect on the meaning of giving and all that it accomplishes for the advancement of philanthropy.

We look forward to seeing you on May 23.

Sincerely,



Jill McWilliams

Thank you to *Cultivate* proofreaders Sarah Lichtenwalter, Evan Munch and Swapna Munirathnam.

## Advertising in *Cultivate*

**A** limited number of business-card size (3.5x2 inches) advertising spaces are available in *Cultivate*.

\$190 - four issues

\$160 - three issues

\$125 - two issues

\$ 70 - one issue

\$325 - double ad size, four issues

\$475 - four-issue insert ad (8.5x11)

To place an ad, visit <https://tinyurl.com/ookj7vk>.

Please consider our advertisers when seeking services. Their ad fees help with the production costs of our award-winning publication.

## WSPN's Philanthropy Awards Honorees

**W**SPN is pleased to announce the 2017 honorees who will be recognized at the **15th Annual Philanthropy Awards Luncheon at 11 a.m. on Tuesday, May 23 at Embassy Suites, 1823 Abriter Court, Naperville**. These honorees provide funding, leadership and gifts of time and talent to many nonprofits that do so much to enhance the quality of life in our communities.

### West Suburban Philanthropic Network's 15th Annual Philanthropy Awards Luncheon Honorees

#### Philanthropists of the Year

Nancy Hamill Winter (Stockton, Ill.) and  
Elizabeth Hamill Bramsen (Barrington Hills)

#### Philanthropic Leadership Award

Sally Pentecost (Naperville)

#### Humanitarian of the Year

Rich Dickson (Carol Stream)

#### Nonprofit Executive of the Year

Kay McKeen, executive director of SCARCE (Glen Ellyn)

#### Foundation Philanthropic Award

Ronald L. McDaniel Foundation (Burr Ridge)

#### Service Club Philanthropic Award

Naperville Noon Lions (Naperville)

#### Grantmaker of the Year

Kristin Carlson Vogen of Oak Park-River Forest Community Foundation (Oak Park)

#### Nonprofit Volunteer of the Year

Ted Lind (Woodstock)

#### Young Philanthropist Award

Rebecca Vogt (Elmhurst)

#### WSPN Distinguished Service Award

Ann E. Spehar (Aurora)

The networking reception is from 11 to 11:30 a.m. followed by lunch. Individual tickets are \$50 per person or \$500 for a table of 10, which includes a business card ad in the program. For more information regarding reservations or to inquire about ad rates and sponsorship opportunities, please visit [www.wspnonline.org](http://www.wspnonline.org) or contact Jessica Noe at [jnoe@feedingamerica.org](mailto:jnoe@feedingamerica.org). ●



# FEEDING AMERICA®

**F**eeding America, headquartered in Chicago, has a mission: feed America's hungry through a nationwide network of member food banks and engage our country in the fight to end hunger.

Last year alone, the Feeding America network of food banks provided 4 billion meals to people in need—more meals to children, families and seniors than any other charitable organization. Through 200 food banks and 60,000 food pantries and meal programs, they touch lives in every county in the United States, providing families and individuals with nutritious food, hope and dignity.

Currently, a staggering 1-in-8 Americans are food insecure, meaning at times they lack access to enough food for an active, healthy life. Food-insecurity rates in the U.S. skyrocketed during the Great Recession and have remained high. Hunger is everywhere—down the street, at work, on the playground and at the senior center.

While the impact of Feeding America can be measured in the number of meals delivered and number of individuals served, nothing can measure what it means to help everyday people take control of their lives. For the people they serve, hope is a hot meal, a bag of groceries and a well-nourished child. Here is one family's story.

### Meet Michelle from Aurora, Illinois

Michelle's family of eight includes her four children, mother, sister-in-law and a family member's child. With only Michelle working, many times they struggle to put food on the table. But every other week Michelle receives nutritious food and words of encouragement as she visits her local food pantry, an agency of Northern Illinois Food Bank, which in turn is a part of the Feeding America network.

"This pantry helps me make ends meet," Michelle said. The day the staff met

her at the pantry, she had received a turkey dinner for the holidays.

She continued, "I'm grateful because this help enables me to stretch my budget enough to get one or two small presents for the children to celebrate this time of year"—which includes birthdays for her two daughters. "I don't want to let them down by not having anything to give. In that sense, by giving us a turkey dinner, this pantry gives us so much more than food. It gives us a chance to celebrate the season like a normal family and forget for a moment our everyday struggles. I'm thankful for that."

For the more than 42 million people in the United States forced to make choices between paying for food and other basic necessities, the Feeding America network offers hope for a brighter future. But how exactly do they secure and distribute so much food?

As the third largest nonprofit in the United States, Feeding America is a



Feeding America staff help distribute food at Mount Sinai Baptist Church Food Pantry in North Chicago, a member agency of Northern Illinois Food Bank.

highly-rated, efficient organization that puts 98 percent of all donations directly back into programs and services.

The collective partnerships between Feeding America's national office and network food banks increase efficiencies and maximize impact. But they cannot do it alone. Everyone plays a role in ending hunger.

To learn more about Feeding America or your local food bank, including volunteer opportunities, visit [www.FeedingAmerica.org](http://www.FeedingAmerica.org). ●

### HOW FEEDING AMERICA PROVIDES MEALS



**DONATIONS ARE MADE:** Feeding America secures donations from national and local retailers, foodservice locations, food companies and government agencies.



**FOOD IS MOVED:** The Feeding America network of food banks moves donated food and grocery products to where they are needed most.



**FOOD IS DISTRIBUTED & STORED:** Member food banks ensure the safe storage and reliable distribution of donated goods to local feeding programs.



**FOOD REACHES PEOPLE IN NEED:** Food banks provide food and grocery items to people in need at food pantries, soup kitchens, youth programs, senior centers and emergency shelters.

# Blasts From the Past - Program Highlights

By Jill McWilliams

## After Hours

**O**n Dec. 8, WSPN members and guests enjoyed holiday cheer, appetizers and networking at Warren's Ale House in Wheaton. Thanks to all who joined us, and we look forward to hosting another After Hours event soon.



Seated: Peggy McGuire, Maeven Sipes, Jill McWilliams, Paul Cwynar  
Second Row: Katie Michel, Catherine Voigt, Courtney Simek, Nancy Duarte, John Suffern, Barb Linek, Lisa Markovic, Evan Munch, Laura Naab, Kate Bousum, Mary Miller, Bill Peterson, Cindy Cwynar, Brad Warren  
Not pictured: Jim Elliott, Tinamarie Hernandez, Brenda Hilligoss, Chris Tews

## Planning Ahead: Charting Your Career Path to Best Benefit You and Your Organization



Theresa Nihill presenting at Metropolitan Family Services in Wheaton.

Their top tips for developing your skills included:

- Be a team player, including with management.
- Turn problems into opportunities by suggesting creative solutions to what seems to be a dilemma.
- Instead of viewing additional assignments as one more task required of you, see them as opportunities for growth and as management investing in you.

**O**n Jan. 19, **Theresa Nihill**, chief operating officer of Metropolitan Family Services of Chicago, and **Laura Stokes-Gray** of Stokes-Gray Consulting shared insights about how long-term career planning allows you to grow within your organization and identifies what skills you may need to develop at work or outside of your position.

- Find a mentor with whom you can talk to and trust.
- Volunteer to serve on committees and work groups.
- Network both inside and outside your organization.
- Make decisions that align with your priorities and your values and the right opportunities will come at the right time.
- Seize opportunities to broaden your knowledge and skills. It's especially important to update your skills as the environment changes.
- Adapt to change and find the positive in it.
- Learn to manage up as well as down.
- As you advance, encourage, empower and invest in those you supervise.

## Finding and Working with "Invisible" Staff Members



David Terrill, David Schreier, Cathy Mousseau and Ken Bartels presenting at DuPage Children's Museum in Naperville.

**O**n Feb. 16, speakers discussed how partnering with consultants and experts in the field can help you reach your goals in an efficient and effective way. Speakers included **Ken Bartels**, principal, Ken Bartels Consulting; **Cathy Mousseau**, president of Mosseau Consulting Group LLC; Moderator **David Schreier**, president of David Schreier Associates LLC; and **David Terrill**, president of Terrill Consulting.

Their insights included:

- A consultant can provide an extra pair of hands, and glean- ing from their expertise, connections, resources and strategic insights can be more cost effective than hiring someone.
- To use their time most efficiently and effectively, be organized, focused and set realistic goals.
- Once mutual trust is established between the consultant and the client, a consultant can provide assistance with building and strengthening relationships between board and staff, client and funders, and client and stakeholders.
- Consultants provide an outside perspective on the organization's "actual" top priorities, potential growth and future success. A philosophical question to ask: If your organization disappeared tomorrow, would anyone care? ●



## Member News



A DuPage Foundation Initiative

### Arts DuPage's Primary Goals:

- Maintaining artsdupage.org, a one-stop online arts and culture resource and calendar for the general public;
- Raising visibility for the arts, creative and cultural opportunities;
- Communicating the value of the arts as an essential community resource;
- Increasing the impact of the arts by building connections within the local arts and culture sector through networking, partnerships and collaborations; and
- Strengthening the capacity of local artists as well as arts and cultural organizations through professional development workshops.



In December, **Heather Kash** joined Neighborhood Food Pantries as development director. In this newly created role, Kash is responsible for building partnerships with local businesses, foundations and organizations.

She brings significant experience from nonprofits such as St. Baldrick's Foundation, where she developed their Chicago presence and corporate recognition program. At Bear Necessities Pediatric Cancer Foundation, she was responsible for revitalizing their community outreach and social media presence.

Neighborhood Food Pantries is dedicated to effectively distributing food and emergency assistance in Northwest DuPage. For more information, visit [www.neighborhoodfp.org](http://www.neighborhoodfp.org).



**Scott LaMorte** was promoted to senior advancement officer at The Conservation Foundation. LaMorte, hired in 2013 as a major gifts officer, has spent the last four years working to raise the number of donors in the Foundation's Prairie Oak Society, TCF's group of \$1,000+ annual donors. Additionally, he helped launch The Perennial Circle, a program to raise awareness of planned giving.

In 2014, TCF received a \$1.5 million donation from The Hamill Family Foundation, one of the largest single donations in The Conservation Foundation's 45-year history.

Founded in 1972, The Conservation Foundation is one of the region's oldest and largest nonprofit land and watershed conservation organizations dedicated to preserving and restoring open space, protecting rivers and watersheds and promoting stewardship of the environment in northeastern Illinois. For more information, visit [www.theconservationfoundation.org](http://www.theconservationfoundation.org).



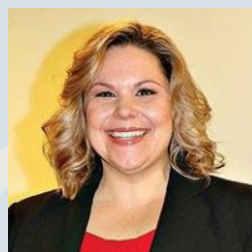
In March, **Evan Munch** joined the Office of Philanthropy at Rush University Medical Center as associate director of development. In this role, Munch provides research and editorial support to the major gifts team at the academic medical center based in Chicago's West Side.

Munch previously served as communications and development specialist with Marianjoy Rehabilitation Hospital, where he oversaw the growth and expansion of the Marianjoy

**Arts DuPage**, [www.artsdupage.org](http://www.artsdupage.org), an initiative of the DuPage Foundation, is a new county-wide arts council focused on promoting engagement and investment in the arts throughout DuPage County.

Foundation's grants and annual giving programs.

At the meeting of the WSPN board of directors on February 8, Munch formally stepped down from his role as WSPN communications chair. As chair of the communications committee, Munch worked to enhance WSPN's social media streams, recruited committee members and developed metrics to measure communications activity. He will continue to serve WSPN in an advisory capacity.



The nation's premier nonprofit adoption agency, The Cradle, warmly welcomes **Sarah O'Donnell** as their vice president of development

and marketing. She brings a depth of experience in fund development, marketing, public relations, communications, volunteer management and event planning to the Evanston-based organization.

O'Donnell has served in nonprofit leadership roles throughout the western suburbs and recently graduated from Community Memorial Foundation's Ladder to Leadership program.

In 2016, O'Donnell was named in Suburban Living's 2016 Best Under 40, and she is a co-chair for WSPN's annual award luncheon. She resides in Glen Ellyn with her husband, Brian, and their daughter, Olivia.

Founded in 1923, The Cradle is an adoption and child welfare agency. In its 93-year history, The Cradle has placed more than 15,000 children with loving families. For more information, visit [www.cradle.org](http://www.cradle.org).

### Share your Member News:

Tell us about your job change, promotion, professional development, awards and honors. Please email your news and photo to Jill McWilliams, *Cultivate* editor, at [jillm@elmhurst.edu](mailto:jillm@elmhurst.edu). ●

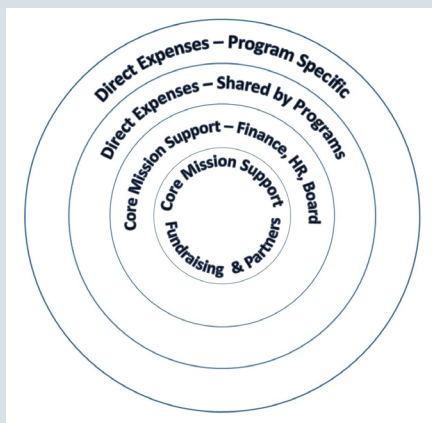


the pie—as diminishing the “real” work of our mission.

Strategic financial functions, good governance, and the development of key funding partnerships are vital to strong organizations. We need a new way to communicate this truth.

### We Need a New Image

Rather than thinking of our investment in key infrastructure as diminishing our programs, it should be seen as valuable **Core Mission Support**.

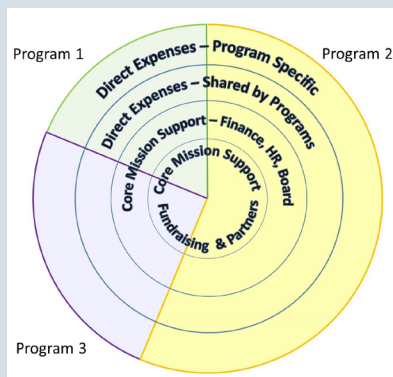


Core Mission Support functions are necessary, vital and integral.

- Strong, strategic finance and accounting
- Progressive human resources practices
- Capable, responsive board governance
- Talented and engaged development staff

### Whole Organizations and True Program Costs

Each of our programs is built around, is supported by, and shares responsibility for **Core Mission Support**.

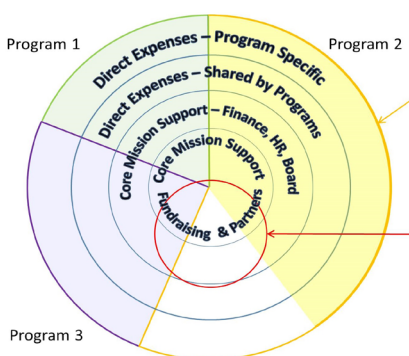


All of the resources we need to accomplish our programs are the **True Program Costs**, which include four types of expenses:

- Direct Expenses: Program-Specific
- Direct Expenses: Shared by Programs
- Core Mission Support: Finance, HR and Board
- Core Mission Support: Fundraising and Partners

### Under-Funded Programs Create a Gap at the Core

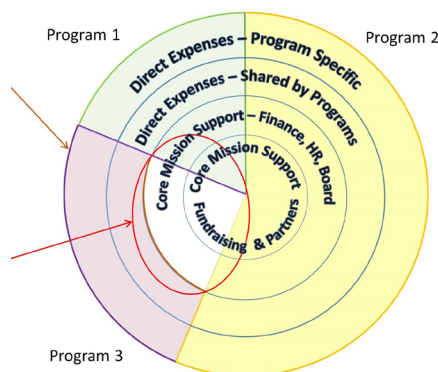
Some programs are only partially funded by contributions or by earned revenue.



When a program is only partially funded, the expenses not covered include a proportionate share of the Core Mission Support. This creates a **Gap** in funding for the finance, human resources, governance and fundraising infrastructure that support the entire organization.

### Line-Item Funding Creates a Gap at the Core

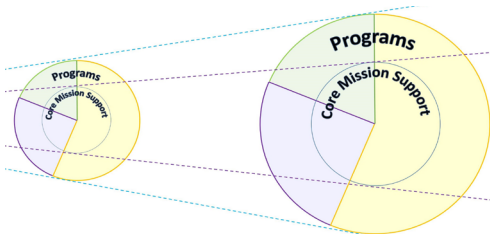
Some funders limit their support to only the direct expenses of program.



When funders support only direct expenses, they deny funding for Core

Mission Support. This leaves a **Gap** at the center of our organization. Not only is one program affected, but the health of the entire organization is at risk.

### Invest in the Core to Grow the Mission



The growth and effectiveness of our mission work depends on having a solid core at the center of our organizations. Investing in our infrastructure is savvy, prudent and absolutely necessary.

### Go Visual With Our New Thinking

Once we have a new way of understanding and communicating about the Core Mission Support needed by our organizations, it is our job to share our thinking with others. Our funders, supporters and investors all want us to succeed. They are partners in accomplishing our mission work. But like us, they may need help re-imagining the role strong infrastructure plays in amplifying program effectiveness.

By providing a simple visual guide, we can help transform the way we talk about, picture and ultimately fund the Core Mission Support that is at the center of all great nonprofits.

Reprinted with permission from Balancing the Mission Checkbook blog of Nonprofits Assistance Fund, nonprofitsassistancefund.org.



Curtis Klotz, CPA, has an education as far removed from his CPA as you can imagine (religion and women's studies). He loves using his disparate background to translate and integrate nonprofit finance with program functions. ●

## Building Our Membership

**Y**our membership in WSPN is important to us. As volunteers, we strive to make education, networking and career enhancement opportunities available to you.

We ask our members and potential members to help in making this a valuable tool and resource to the suburban nonprofit community and to the profession.

For only \$40 per year, WSPN is the best value in town! Let us know if an organizational membership would be beneficial for your group.

Thank you,

Courtney Simek, membership chair  
csimek@seniorhomesharing.org



[tinyurl.com/WSPNFacebook](http://tinyurl.com/WSPNFacebook)



[twitter.com/WSPNOnline](http://twitter.com/WSPNOnline)

## Attention members:

**We want to keep in touch!**

**Have you changed jobs or received a new title?**

**Do you have a new email or mailing address?**

Simply log into your profile on [www.wspnonline.org](http://www.wspnonline.org) and update your contact information.

Request a new password if you've forgotten it.

Also, join WSPN on LinkedIn to extend your networking possibilities.

Be a part of the dialog.

## Scholarships

**T**he world of philanthropy is teeming with substantial information. Let WSPN help you access it!

If your philanthropic organization doesn't have sufficient funds to send you to the latest AFP conference, Forefront course or other philanthropy educational event, WSPN can offer financial assistance for these skill-building workshops and trainings.

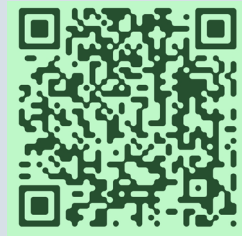
### HOW TO APPLY:

Scholarships for training and continuing education opportunities are available to WSPN members. Scholarships can be applied to a variety of educational opportunities related to fundraising and nonprofit management.

If you are a member of WSPN and interested in applying for a scholarship, please complete an application form found at [www.wspnonline.org](http://www.wspnonline.org).

## Become a WSPN member:

Check out [www.wspnonline.org](http://www.wspnonline.org) to learn more about WSPN benefits including our monthly educational events, job opportunities and scholarship information.



**Scan to join.**

Join online or by downloading a membership application at [www.wspnonline.org](http://www.wspnonline.org).  
Non-transferable dues are \$40 per year.

# PhilanTopic Resources

## **Robert L. Weiner: Nonprofit Fundraising Consulting,** **www.rlweiner.com/resources**

Need expert advice on technology? On Robert Weiner's list of fundraising technology resources, you'll find links to articles and resources about donor databases, email marketing, online fundraising, development operations, spam avoidance, technology planning and related issues.

## **Supporting Fundraising,** **www.supportingfundraising.com**

Provides resources with a primary focus on database management, fundraising software selection, data quality, data acquisition, policies and procedures, systems, websites, e-philanthropy, reporting and analytics, finance and administration and other resources and samples that can help you in your day-to-day job.

## **GrantSpace, grantspace.org**

A service of Foundation Center, GrantSpace offers free web seminars and podcasts under their Training tab. Their Blog tab also provides free articles about building strong, sustainable organizations.

## **Travel in Comfort:**

- **Hopper** is the award-winning mobile app that doesn't just let you book flights from your phone; it also tells you when is the best time to buy. Have confidence that you're booking smart and saving money.
- **SeatGuru, www.seatguru.com**  
An essential flight-advice site powered by TripAdvisor that has seat maps, advice from travelers who have rated each flight, each plane, each seat, and tell you all about it. Before you pay for an upgrade, find out if it's worth it.

## **Share your resources:**

Do you have favorite resources you would like to share with *Cultivate* readers? Please email them to [jillm@elmhurst.edu](mailto:jillm@elmhurst.edu).

## **The Seven Cardinal Rules of Fundraising Writing** (continued from page 1)

If you've had CPR training, you know that one of the first things to do is pick a bystander, point at him, and loudly say, "You—call 9-1-1!"

Why not shout, "Somebody call 9-1-1"? After all, anyone can call. But the training makes it clear: you put all the pressure on one person. If you don't, it's possible (in fact, likely) that every single bystander will think, "Someone else will do it"—and nobody will make the lifesaving call.

Fundraising requires that same sense of aggressive urgency. When it's not there, when it's the equivalent of "Somebody call 9-1-1," we get the same result. Everyone thinks someone else will take care of it. Hardly anyone gives.

### **2. Make It Easy to Read**

If readers have to labor to read your fundraising message, they usually won't bother. This isn't because donors are ignorant or inattentive. It's because concentration is hard work and most people are already doing all the mental work they care to do.

You have to earn every second of their attention. One of the best ways is to make what you write easy to read.

The most common reading-ease tool is the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level. It's a standard that looks at sentence length and the number of long words to yield a grade level. Microsoft Word calculates the grade level as part of its grammar-check function. You can also find online calculators if you Google "Flesch-Kincaid."

Effective fundraising copy has a reading-ease level somewhere between 4th and 6th grade.

Here's one of the most important truths I can tell you: Reading ease is not about education. And it's especially not about intelligence.

Sixth-grade level copy isn't just for 6th-graders. It's just easier to read. Easier for everyone, no matter how well-educated.

### **3. Long Messages Work Better**

I hate long letters. I wish they'd just get to the point. I bet you don't care for long letters, either. Nevertheless, long fundraising messages work.

I've tested long against short many times. In direct mail, the shorter message

does better only about 10 percent of the time (a short message does tend to work better for emergency fundraising).

But most often, if you're looking for a way to improve an appeal, add another page. Most likely it'll boost response. Often it can generate a higher average gift, too.

Some believe the era of long messages is ending. They say text messaging, 140-character Tweets, and changes in the way people communicate and retrieve information work against people sitting down to read. Maybe. But so far, longer fundraising messages are holding their own.

### **4. Grammar for Fundraisers**

Fundraising copy that works is colloquial, informal and simple. It doesn't call attention to the education of the writer. In fact, it's far more important to sound natural than it is to obey the grammar, usage and structure rules your English teachers taught you.

Let me admit something here: before I was a fundraiser, I was an English teacher. I taught the rules of grammar and composition to thousands of students. I struggled and sweated to make them understand and value good academic writing.

Then I became a fundraiser. Like many who have an academic background, I struggled. My best writing wasn't getting the job done. The better I wrote, the worse the results.

But then one day I had an epiphany. I was reading some of my own copy, enjoying an especially elegant turn of phrase, mentally patting myself on the back for my cleverness. Then out of the blue, I had a vision of my mother reading that same passage. It became clear that my beautiful writing would have puzzled and annoyed her. I could visualize her frown as she made a good-faith attempt to understand what I'd written.

She would have simply responded: "Jeffrey, if you want me to give, why don't you just say so?"

I immediately embarked on a self-imposed reeducation program to become a real fundraising writer.

### **5. Persuade with Story, Not Statistics**

So many fundraisers think the size or intractability of a problem is what makes it compelling. What they're missing is that



donors don't want to solve a problem because it's big. They want to solve it because it's solvable.

You've heard that 22,000 children die from hunger-related causes every day. That's mind-boggling. Heartbreaking.

I spent years looking for ways to make that fact vivid. I talked about how many children die in an hour (917) or a minute (15). I painted visions of emptied-out American towns with populations around 22,000 (Portsmouth, New Hampshire, or Fairfax, Virginia). It never worked.

The fact that the daily toll is mind-boggling is exactly why it's a terrible fundraising platform. It's a fact we can't process. It has so many faces it effectively has no face at all.

If you want action, you must help donors feel the pain of hunger by seeing it play out in one life. Then give them the opportunity to save one life—then another and another.

If you want to put it in environmental terms, it's one pelican, covered in sticky tar and flopping along the beach, that galvanizes response to an oil spill. Not the reports of millions of gallons of oil churning into the ocean.

## 6. Make It All About the Donor

You're not raising money to fund your organization. You're enabling your donors to make the world a better place—through your organization.

That means the only facts that matter in fundraising are those you can directly connect to donors. To do that, apply the BOY rule.

BOY stands for "Because of You." It means you never lose a chance to credit donors for the good work your organization does. Make it a habit to include "Because of You" with everything you say:

- Our programs help homeless people all over our city because of you.
- There are long stretches of beautiful open beaches and shoreline in our state because of you.
- New audience members enjoyed the ballet this year, including hundreds of elementary school kids, because of you.

## 7. Call to Action

It's normal to start a conversation with easy, inconsequential small talk ("Nice weather we're having"). We do this to gauge the mood of those we're talking to and to ease our way to the topic at hand, especially when the topic is difficult.

It's tempting to do this in fundraising because asking for money is hard. Resist! Time spent "warming up" to your asking is time for donors to lose interest.

The reason fundraisers do this, in my opinion, is to avoid the call to action—because it feels, well, aggressive to come right out and ask for money.

Let me tell you a secret: Nobody is fooled by your fundraising appeal. They don't think they're getting a letter from a pal. They know you sent it to ask for money. If you fail to ask or pretend not to ask, all you accomplish is unclear communication.

So just ask.



Jeff Brooks is author of *How to Turn Your Words into Money* and *The Fundraiser's Guide to Irresistible Communications*. Visit his blog at [www.futurefundraisingnow.com](http://www.futurefundraisingnow.com). Article reprinted with permission. ●

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WSPN programs are free to WSPN members and \$20 for non-members.

Programs are usually held on the third Thursday of each month.

**Registration and refreshments begin at 8 a.m. and the program begins at 8:30 a.m., unless specified.**

**For more information or to register, visit [www.wspnonline.org](http://www.wspnonline.org).**

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**Thursday, March 16**    **Topic:** Board Development and Engagement  
**Speakers:** Marcy McKay, chapter board recruiter with Gift of Adoption Fund  
Steve Pratapas, principal of Pratapas Associates, LLC  
**Location:** Robert Crown Center for Health Education, 21 Salt Creek Ln., Hinsdale

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**Thursday, April 20**    **Topic:** Restructuring for Success: Mission Sustainability through Organizational Restructuring and Strategic Collaborations  
**Speakers:** Jean Butzen, Mission + Strategy Consulting  
Mike Havala, executive director of Loaves & Fishes  
Linda Zager, executive director of Back Office Cooperative  
**Location:** TBD

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**Save these dates, too. More details to follow.**

**June 15 - Funders Panel • September 21 • October 19**

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## West Suburban Philanthropic Network 15th Annual Philanthropy Awards Luncheon

**Tuesday, May 23**    **LOCATION:** Embassy Suites, 1823 Abriter Court, Naperville, IL 60563  
Networking begins at 11 a.m., luncheon follows. Register online—\$50 per person or \$500 for a table of 10 which includes a business card ad in the program. Sponsorship opportunities are available from \$500 to \$5,000. Visit [www.wspnonline.org](http://www.wspnonline.org).

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