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**ROTARY GRANT INCUBATES NORTHSKY NONPROFIT NETWORK TO SERVE  
REGION'S 400 NONPROFITS**

**TRAVERSE CITY, MICH, Jan. 24, 2007** – The region's 400 nonprofit organizations now have a management support organization solely dedicated to serving them, thanks to a \$100,000 cornerstone grant from Rotary Charities. **NorthSky Nonprofit Network** was announced today by Rotary Charities Executive Director Marsha Smith. Smith also introduced Debra McKeon as NorthSky's first executive director.

NorthSky's mission is to build capacity, leadership, and sustainability for nonprofit organizations throughout the region. NorthSky has been incubated by the Rotary Charities grant —under the umbrella of Rotary Camps and Services—and a \$20,000 grant from the Traverse City-based Alabaster Fund.

**Origins of NorthSky Nonprofit Network**

NorthSky's roots date back to 2004, when the Great Lakes Nonprofit Institute (GLNI) was formed through a partnership between Rotary Charities and Northwestern Michigan College (NMC) to build the capacity and sustainability of regional nonprofits. In the ensuing two years, GLNI provided a variety of services to the area's nonprofit community, including a comprehensive needs assessment, several demonstration consulting projects for natural resource organizations, and by instituting BoardConnect, a training program that helps match nonprofits with potential board members.

In keeping with the GLNI business plan, Rotary Charities stepped forward to take the organization beyond provision of educational services via the partnership with NMC to the next level of becoming a stand-alone, sanctioned management support organization (MSO), like

hundreds of others that serve nonprofit organizations nationwide. More than 20 currently operate in Michigan, though NorthSky is one of the first to serve nonprofits in rural areas.

The NorthSky Nonprofit Network name and brand were created to reflect the broader vision and service area. NMC and NorthSky have inked a revised agreement to ensure NMC's continued involvement in education-related services.

A 2005 survey indicated that more than 400 nonprofit organizations now operate in the five-county area. Demands for dollars, involvement, and leadership continue to increase, leaving many nonprofits with management and fiscal challenges. MSOs like NorthSky can provide specific services to lower overhead or improve efficiency – or even provide complete management services, as in the case of the Traverse Area Arts Council (TraverseARTS).

NorthSky has inked an agreement with TraverseARTS to provide complete management support services, thus increasing efficiencies for all TraverseARTS members. McKeon had previously served as the executive director for TraverseARTS.

### **NorthSky's Organization & Services**

NorthSky will operate under the auspices of Rotary Camps & Services until the organization has obtained its own tax-exempt status. An Advisory Council will also provide additional oversight and guidance. Members include Beth Karczewski, Mary Beth Milliman, Elaine Wood, Tim Nelson, Don Fraser, Marsha Smith, Erik and Leslie Falconer, and John Paul.

Providing a wide range of affordable consulting and management services, NorthSky will serve nonprofits in all subsectors, from environmental to social services, arts & culture, and more. Clients are expected to include nonprofits throughout northern Michigan.

NorthSky will fulfill its mission by providing comprehensive capacity building assistance in three intersecting spheres of service targeted at 1) nonprofit organizations, 2) individuals, and 3) communities. Both standardized and customized programs and assistance are available in:

?? organizational assessment, planning and evaluation;

- ?? program development and management;
- ?? board/governance assistance, including BoardConnect;
- ?? marketing, communications and advocacy;
- ?? information technology, human resources, legal and financial services;
- ?? fund development;
- ?? education and training of board members staff and volunteers;
- ?? and more.

In addition to McKeon serving as executive director, staff includes former GLNI manager Laura Heintzelman as administrative manager; and Pam Hayes as program manager, who will lead NorthSky's educational, training, and professional development programs, including BoardConnect. Additional staff and/or consultants will be engaged as needed.

**(Photos available on request.)**

## **What They're Saying About NorthSky Nonprofit Network**

“By announcing NorthSky and its mission to support the nonprofit community in northern Michigan, we are essentially moving forward the great missions of all the 400 nonprofits in the area. It’s a powerful thought – that this organization could help impact so much in the community. This announcement is the culmination of a great deal of planning, work, dedication and support by so many at Rotary, NMC, Traverse City Area Chamber of Commerce and the Alabaster Fund as well as nonprofit and community leaders. Although we are officially just underway, the momentum even now is truly incredible.”

-- Debra McKeon, executive director, NorthSky Nonprofit Network

“NorthSky follows a Rotary tradition to support the development of organizations serving a need previously unmet. NorthSky provides capacity-building resources for nonprofit organizations, many of which are also Rotary grant recipients. This is part of a dual strategy at Rotary Charities – to employ both a direct grant program to help build management, governance, leadership, technical or adaptive capacities, and the creation of NorthSky to provide a wide range of services focused on building these necessary capacities.”

-- Marsha Smith, executive director, Rotary Charities of Traverse City

“NorthSky is another excellent example of Michigan innovation; it’s a creative partnership that delivers value to organizations with a proven need.”

-- Carl Levin, U.S. Senator, (D-Michigan)

“Nonprofits represent a growing sector of our economy. I applaud NorthSky Nonprofit Network for serving northern Michigan and helping to provide the region with the support they need.”

-- Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm

“NMC is proud to have helped give life to this important organization and to our ongoing collaborations to serve the nonprofit groups in our region.”

-- Tim Nelson, president, Northwestern Michigan College

“It is an absolute privilege for Alabaster Fund to have the opportunity to support NorthSky. It plays such a vital role in our community by supporting and strengthening nonprofits. We see our investment in NorthSky as a way to increase the effectiveness of all of our other community giving.”

-- Erik Falconer, director, Alabaster Fund

“Nonprofits have many challenges to face, and often don't have the staff to meet all the expectations. The current focus on accountability and business-like practices can be somewhat frustrating and can take critical time away from mission-focused activities. MSOs play a critical role in supporting local nonprofit staff and volunteers: they understand local issues, local politics, and local resources in a way that state and national organizations can't. NorthSky has established a solid foundation of contacts at all levels to make sure northern Michigan nonprofits have quick access to high quality resources and support.”

-- Robin Grinnell, director, Michigan Nonprofit Leadership Institute, Michigan Nonprofit Association

"Nonprofit organizations are playing an increasingly important role in shaping our region's culture, values, and economy. NorthSky provides a mechanism to ensure that the energies of nonprofits are not wasted, and that each organization is able to be a net contributor to positive growth and development. As such, it is very consistent with the Chamber's mission to grow business and build community, and we support its efforts."

-- Doug Luciani, president and chief executive officer, Traverse City Area Chamber of Commerce

"The Traverse Area Arts Council is fortunate to have an opportunity to partner in delivering better services to our arts members through this new collaborative venture."

-- Rich Odell, president of the board, Traverse Area Arts Council

"The NorthSky Nonprofit Network is the right answer at the right time for nonprofit organizations. The shift in our economy and the downsizing of government puts an increasing burden on communities and nonprofits to provide essential services. Nonprofits support our quality of life, which is the cornerstone of northern Michigan's economic well-being. Through NorthSky, nonprofits will be better able to align missions with community needs. The result will be an efficient system of sustainable nonprofits that is yielding tangible, essential results. In the near term, we're delighted to be partnering with NorthSky to develop a plan to support the emergence of our arts and culture community as a vital economic force in Manistee County."

-- Reneé Ihlenfeldt, acting executive director, Manistee Economic Development Office

"Just speaking to GLNI's role in the community, there has been real benefit to our organization in experiencing training with our peers and partners in the conservation world. Especially in areas like fundraising that can be a bit sensitive, it has been very effective for CRA to spend time on this important topic..."

-- Amy Beyer, director, Conservation Resource Alliance

## **About the Organizations**

### *NorthSky Nonprofit Network*

NorthSky is a management support organization (MSO) providing capacity, leadership, and sustainability support to nonprofits throughout northern Michigan. NorthSky Nonprofit Network evolved from the Great Lakes Nonprofit Institute (GLNI) originally formed in 2004 through a partnership between Rotary Charities and Northwestern Michigan College. NorthSky is currently operating under the auspices of Rotary Camps & Services until NorthSky has obtained tax exempt status. Offices are located in the Traverse City Area Chamber of Commerce building. Information on NorthSky can be found at [www.northskynonprofitnetwork.org](http://www.northskynonprofitnetwork.org), by calling (231) 995-2537, or e-mail [info@northskynonprofitnetwork.org](mailto:info@northskynonprofitnetwork.org).

### *Rotary Charities of Traverse City*

Since its inception in the mid-70s, Rotary Charities has distributed more than \$35 million in the form of more than 560 grants to organizations and nonprofits in Antrim, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska and Leelanau counties. The public foundation was formed following the discovery in July of 1976 of valuable oil and natural gas reserves on property owned by the Traverse City Rotary Club. Its purpose over the years has been to distribute income generated from the investment of oil and gas royalties to

organizations throughout the five-county region of Northwest Michigan. In partnership with Rotary Camps & Services, Rotary Charities has "incubated" four major nonprofits in northwestern Michigan: the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy; the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation; the community land trust, HomeStretch and most recently, NorthSky Nonprofit Network, a nonprofit management support organization. More information is available at [www.rotarycharities.org](http://www.rotarycharities.org)

### *Rotary Camps & Services*

Since 1955, Rotary Camps & Services has been the land management arm of the Traverse City Rotary Club. Over the years, related activities have included conservation and stewardship. Today, Camps & Services leverages land so that working families can access affordable housing. Regional camping opportunities, increased public access for recreation, trails and parks, and protecting and improving the Boardman River and Valley are principal goals and objectives. Rotary Camps & Services also serves as a fiscal agent for new regional organizations that Rotary Charities initiates until the new entity obtains independent tax exempt status. More information is available at [www.rotarycharities.org](http://www.rotarycharities.org).

### *Northwestern Michigan College*

Northwestern Michigan College is a publicly funded community college that serves people, organizations and businesses throughout the Grand Traverse region. Serving more than 50,000 learners annually. NMC offers associates degrees and professional certificates and, through our University Center, 10 partner universities grant baccalaureate, graduate and doctoral degrees. NMC's extensive extended education program offers a vast array of non-credit classes to more than 10,000 local residents annually. More at [nmc.edu](http://nmc.edu).

### **About the Executive Director**

Debra McKeon previously served as executive director of TraverseARTS while concurrently serving as president of McKeon & Associates Inc. (founded in 1986), a management and consulting company specializing in the nonprofit sector. Ms. McKeon has guided strategic planning processes, business plan development, start-up projects and diversified revenue stream programs in the non-profit sector; public relations, advocacy and educational initiatives; international arts touring and exchange programs; and non-profit board development programs. Clients range from the American Symphony Orchestra League to Casita Maria of New York to Youth Music Australia. Other positions have included founder and CEO of the Youth Orchestra of the Americas, assistant manager of the New York Philharmonic, and executive director of the Elgin (IL) Symphony Orchestra.

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