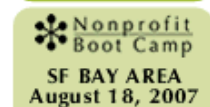




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Group connects nonprofits, board members

08.28.2007 -

By [Todd Cohen](#)

In February, a month after she moved to the Triangle from Connecticut, Kristen Fortney started looking for a way to volunteer.

Using the website of Triangle BoardConnect, a program of the Executive Service Corps of the Triangle that matches nonprofits and prospective board members, Fortney filled out an online form and indicated her specific interest in volunteer management.

Within days, she received a phone call from the executive director of the Volunteer Center of Durham, and in May attended her first meeting as a member of the center's board.

"It's a terrific tool for people and nonprofits," says Fortney, assistant director of career services for the Executive MBA program at the Fuqua School of Business at Duke University.

Launched last November and serving Chatham, Durham, Orange and Wake counties, Triangle BoardConnect grew out of a need Executive Service Corps consultants saw among nonprofits to be more strategic and focused in selecting board members, says Ed Rose, volunteer director of Triangle BoardConnect.

"Most boards are limited by the network of people already on the board," says Rose, who retired as a KPMG partner in Cleveland and serves on the Executive Service Corps board. "The problem is the network. It's just very limited."

Nonprofits and individuals wanting to serve on boards can use the site, at triangleboardconnect.org, to create their own profiles, spelling out their respective specific needs and interests.

By the end of July, over 130 nonprofits had registered to use the site, 130 individuals were seeking board positions, and nonprofits were seeking board members for over 100 positions.

Triangle BoardConnect, a partnership that includes the N.C. Center for Nonprofits, Triangle Community Foundation and Triangle United Way, promotes the site through direct mail, email and 24 community partners it has developed that include leadership programs and major employers in the region.

And the group is targeting over 400 nonprofits to participate, all drawn from the mailing lists of its three partners.

Triangle BoardConnect also follows up with individuals or nonprofits if the web profiles they have created need additional information or if they have not responded to inquiries from nonprofits or individuals, respectively.

And next year, Rose says, the Center for Nonprofits will develop education programs for nonprofits that will address issues involving board development.

Those programs might examine topics like analyzing board needs, development of candidates by nominating committees, and creation of a package for prospective board members that could include financial statements, documents about the nonprofit's programs, the organization's strategic plan, and a list of board members and their responsibilities.

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Triangle BoardConnect has received funding from Triangle United Way, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina, RBC Centura and a donor-advised fund at Triangle Community Foundation.

"It's critical to have a good board because they provide oversight and governance for what the program is going to be and how it should be carried out," Rose says.

Stephen Raburn, executive director of the Volunteer Center of Durham, says Triangle BoardConnect is like a dating service.

"You can list specific characteristics, or get better connected in the corporate community," he says. "You can be a little more strategic and scientific in your search."

Fortney, who in Connecticut worked as an executive recruiter and served on the board of the Volunteer Center of Southwest Fairfield County, says she encourages MBA students she works with to volunteer and to use Triangle BoardConnect.

"You should be on at least one board," she says. "It's a great way to network, to develop professionally, as well as getting involved in the community and really making a difference."

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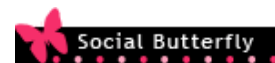
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