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2016 Annual Nonprofit Conference
October 27, 2016
CT Convention Center, Hartford

NONPROFIT Advantage
SUMMER 2016
The Voice of Community Nonprofits

There are thousands of nonprofits in our state – each trying to make a difference on their own. We bring them together so that each member can benefit from our collective strength.

Connecticut Community Nonprofit Alliance (The Alliance) is the largest membership organization in the state dedicated exclusively to working with nonprofits in Connecticut. By connecting organizations with information, education, advocacy and collaboration, we help members focus their energy on the people and communities they serve.

The Alliance can provide your organization with vital cost-saving opportunities, a dedicated public policy and advocacy team, specialized training and education programs, information on nonprofit trends and best practices and connections with nonprofit colleagues throughout the state. Learn more at www.ctnonprofitalliance.org or call us at 860.525.5080 x1014.
Our 2016 conference theme, *Vision. Action. Impact.*, is all about using our collective voice to mobilize and empower our communities to improve quality of life.

We look forward to seeing you at our 2016 Annual Nonprofit Conference on October 27 at the CT Convention Center in Hartford!

Registration for the conference will open soon.
The power of a collective voice, the importance of collaboration, and the need to take risks to achieve better-than-expected results; these are all elements of effective advocacy. Faced with a state budget in “permanent fiscal crisis” as described by OPM Secretary Barnes and a budget proposal by the Governor that reduced over $400 million to life-sustaining programs and services, CT Community Nonprofit Alliance had an incredible challenge to overcome - after just three days of existence!

Despite an increasingly difficult budget environment, our advocacy strategy remained focused on the effectiveness of critical services and programs that enhance the quality of life in our communities. The focus is (and was) about strengthening communities and serving at-risk individuals throughout Connecticut. To this end, we empowered our members, their staff, Board members and volunteers, to engage in discussions with policymakers from all three branches of government, early and often, all sharing the same message - that people matter.

To better understand our advocacy activities, it is helpful to review the state budget and legislative cycles. Every fall, state agencies submit budget options (policy revisions) to begin developing the Governor’s budget proposal for the next fiscal year (announced the following February at the beginning of the legislative session). CT Community Nonprofit Alliance uses the fall months to talk to policymakers about their priorities during Division meetings, regional legislative meetings, site visits/tours hosted by members and at statewide task forces, oversight councils, and committees. These conversations provide critical insight into developing our legislative agenda, administrative policy priorities and advocacy strategy.

Concurrently, we host issue forums to educate members on trending national (new DOL Overtime regulations), state (attack on nonprofit tax exemptions) and local (ordinances that support/provide barriers to nonprofit activities) issues and bring in experts and national partners to present on these topics. The goals are to educate and empower members to advance solutions and policy recommendations before the start of the regular legislative session.

In election years, we also shift our focus to civic engagement activities such as...
Child Advocates of SW Connecticut

Child Advocates of SW Connecticut (CAC) joined CT Community Nonprofit Alliance in 2010 when CAC was a new nonprofit. Over the next few years, CAC attended workshops co-sponsored by CT Community Nonprofit Alliance, attended the annual conference, and participated in Lobby Day. But little did we know how valuable our membership would be.

Last year, CAC made the bold decision to draft new legislation that could potentially help thousands of Connecticut’s foster children. With no previous experience, and no money to hire a lobbyist, CAC reached out to CT Nonprofit Alliance for help.

Jeff Shaw explained the process from the start. We began our work, continuing to call Jeff for advice at each stage. When we hit a road block, we called Jeff. When we felt hopeless, Jeff was able to provide perspective. When we had our Public Hearing, Jeff signed us up to testify and watched the list to keep us informed. And finally, on the very last night of the Legislative Session, Jeff was our sole source of information inside the Capitol. When Bill 347 passed at 11:57 pm we got the news in an email from Jeff! Many thanks to CT Community Nonprofit Alliance and Jeff – we could not have done it without you!

Jeff Shaw is the Director of Public Policy at CT Community Nonprofit Alliance. He received a Bachelor’s degree from the University of Connecticut, a Master’s degree from Fairfield University and a second Master’s degree in Public Health from the University of Connecticut School of Community Medicine. He is responsible for the overarching public policy issues championed by CT Nonprofit Alliance.

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WWW.CTNONPROFITS.ORG
By all measures, the first Arts Day at the Capitol in twenty years was a resounding success, setting the stage - quite literally - for continued emphasis on the power and critical impact of the Arts. This extraordinary event was presented on March 2nd by the Connecticut Office of the Arts in partnership with the nine Designated Regional Service Organizations (DRSOs), The Culture and Tourism Advisory Committee, The Connecticut Arts Council and the Connecticut Arts Alliance. Connecticut Arts Day: ‘Moving the Arts from Nice to Necessary,’ was a true celebration of the economic and social impact of the Arts in Connecticut.

Nearly 500 stakeholders, representing all aspects of the Cultural Community (from Artists to arts organizations, educators and elected officials), participated in a day of recognition, informational panels and sessions, performances and collaborative, strategic planning. CT Community Nonprofit Alliance was proud to lend our voice and support, as panelist for the presentation on Advocacy - alongside State Senator & Majority Leader Bob Duff, Jay Dick, Senior Director of State & Government Affairs, Americans for the Arts, Cynthia Clair, Executive Director, Arts Council of greater New Haven and Amy Wynn, Chair, Connecticut Arts Alliance. Eric Dillner, CEO and Executive Director, Shoreline Arts Alliance -- and member of the Board of Directors of the CT Community Nonprofit Alliance -- moderated a panel discussion on the impact of the Arts.

From the opening remarks by Lieutenant Governor Nancy Wyman and Senator Beth Bye, throughout the day, the overwhelming support of prominent elected officials was on full display. Catherine Smith, Commissioner of DECD, State Senators Bob Duff and Tony Hwang and State Rep. Matt Ritter spoke of the value of the arts to the state. Many additional legislators were compelled to speak in support of the contributions and intrinsic value of the Arts and Culture sector. Also participating were leaders from the business community, including Robert Santy, President and CEO of the Connecticut Economic Resource Center and Joe Brennan, President and CEO of the Connecticut Business and Industry Association.

Why are the Arts necessary? It is well documented that enriching the cultural fabric of our communities is essential to an enhanced quality of life. On a daily basis, the Arts & Culture sector interfaces with each and every aspect of the populations represented and served by the nonprofit community. In addition, Connecticut’s Arts & Culture sector is a $653 million industry. The Arts & Culture industry:

- Supports over 18,000 full-time jobs.
- $462.5 million in household income.
- Industry organizations spend $455.5 million annually.$197.5 million in additional spending on restaurants, parking and hotel rooms.

For most every stakeholder within the Arts and Cultural Community, there is certainly consensus that the Arts are not only ‘necessary,’ but a critical component to the quality of life and economic stability of our State. CT Arts Day provided the opportunity to reinforce this principle in a commanding way, and to impart a deeper understanding, which is truly essential to sustainable growth of the sector.

Our congratulations and sincere appreciation to Catherine Smith, Commissioner, and Kristina Newman-Scott, Director of Culture, Dept. of Economic & Community Development, on the extraordinary success of Arts Day at the Capitol 2016!

By Julia Wilcox
Senior Public Policy Specialist
CT Nonprofit Alliance
Every day, new technologies are transforming the way we live, play, learn and work. To keep pace with these changes and take advantage of their opportunities they offer, nonprofits need to invest in both staff development and training for board members, volunteers and activists.

But, as many in the nonprofit sector already know, this is easier said than done.

The stark reality of the organization’s limited resources present a challenging hurdle. So does the ability to find funding for actual capacity-building. Donors and foundations are often more interested in funding programs rather than organizational development.

Even nonprofits with adequate levels of employee and organizational development funding, there is a third, and often higher, hurdle. Training isn’t translating into a clearly measurable benefit.

Developing a New Model

As trainers for the nonprofit sectors, we observe these dynamics first hand. Organizations invest resources in training with the goal of increasing the flow of new funding, driving down operating costs and improving programs and services but they aren’t getting results.

That’s because even with funding and a commitment to capacity building, there are still significant obstacles that can derail the process. Even when people are excited to implement the new things they’ve learned, they still find it difficult to break from old work habits. They may find it difficult to translate interesting, but generic, new concepts to their unique work environments. Implementation also may require the involvement of a number of people in the organization, including people who have not benefited from the specific training. Often, the level of learning across key team members varies wildly, leading to confusion and lack of consensus on how to move forward.

In the Fall of 2014, we approached CT Nonprofit Alliance, then the CT Association of Nonprofits, with the idea of using e-learning to build on CT Nonprofits long history of nonprofit training to help overcome these training challenges.

We started with a few key courses, augmenting the traditional classroom experience with online webinars, downloadable workbooks, video presentations, e-books, and online office hours. The material was designed to fully support course participants as they moved their learning into action.

After gathering input from course participants, we set out to test a more comprehensive approach for blending the benefits of e-learning with the more traditional classroom experience.

Understanding E-Learning

Modern e-learning is so much more than just the traditional classroom experience delivered over internet. While that old approach can help make the traditional classroom experience more convenient to access, it fails to address the key learning challenge of the traditional model. These include:

- **Cognitive Overload.** We all have a limited capacity to absorb new information. Because classes are usually over 45 minutes, and often
much longer, they typically overload students. That’s one of the reasons you might find yourself daydreaming in class or thinking about completely unrelated topics. It’s also why homework is assigned that often covers the same material that was taught in class.

- **Learning to Action Disconnect** How many times have you been to a seminar or conference, gotten excited about all the great information you learned, and then because of your work priorities did not have time to start applying what you’ve learned for weeks or months? Then, when you’re ready to turn your attention to taking action, you find yourself struggling to remember what you learned.

You are certainly not alone. Studies have shown that fewer than 15% of students are able to successfully apply what they learn. Within just 30 days, you’re likely to have forgotten 80% of what you just learned and that jumps to 90% after a year.

The new e-learning model is designed to address these core issues. Today, e-learning courses are structured as a series of shorter class. Sometimes the class can be just a few minutes long. For an upper limited, they are no more than 25 minutes in length. This keeps students from being overloaded with content and information and allows them to both learn and then remember what they learned so they can put it into action.

Following short classes, the new e-learning model immediately reinforces the material. Quizzing with real time feedback, for instance, moves new concepts into long term memory. Short worksheets also are powerful tools to help students digest the information and immediately have them put what they’ve learned into practice.

**E-Learning for Organizational Transformation**

Using new learning in the workplace often requires teams of stakeholders. Getting these teams together to learn can be a scheduling nightmare and team members often leave the training with only pieces of what was taught.

When teams use e-learning, they can more easily develop a common framework and common understanding. While there are common deadlines, each person can move through the lessons at times that are convenient for them.

With an action oriented worksheet, the class can even begin to work together after just the first short class. This allows them to begin progress almost immediately and accelerate both their learning and their results.

Finally, online classes can serve as an ongoing resource for team members. This allows them, at any time, to return and review any class or concept.

**E-learning Comes to CT Community Nonprofit Alliance**

This past Winter, we launched the iMission Institute with our flagship course “Getting Your Next 1000 Donors”. The course utilizes a state-of-the-art e-learning platform to deliver 12 online class modules, each with specific action oriented worksheets and supplemented with videos, quizzes and case studies.

These online modules were also used as an integral part of a live, face-to-face course taught at the CT Community Nonprofit Alliance’s learning center in Hartford. This blended approach used the e-learning to teach key concepts allowing the classes to focus on practical group work and lively interactive discussions.

This Fall, iMission Institute and CT Community Nonprofit Alliance will offer “Getting Your Next 1000 Donors” again as well as launching our newest blended course “Developing Nonprofit’s Grand Organizational Strategy”. Watch for the course schedules and registration on www ccpa-inc.org/education-training.

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**The Children’s Center of Hamden**

The Administrative team at The Children’s Center of Hamden participates in several division meetings offered by CT Community Nonprofit Alliance. One of us usually attends Public Policy, Corporate Compliance, CFO, Clinical Directors or the Children’s Division meetings. We are consistently humbled by the dedicated advocacy exercised by our sister agencies on the behalf of the youth and families we collectively serve and are most appreciative of the opportunities created by the CT Community Nonprofit Alliance to connect us with our colleagues. On March 16th, while at Lobby Day, I was reminded that our words are best heard when joined with the voices of those we serve. A.L., the mom of a child enrolled in our Extended Day Treatment Program accompanied me and Liz Robles, a Case Manager to Hartford. With many of you we waited to see our Legislators. Thanks to the diligence of Ben and Brunilda, A.L.’s wait was rewarded with a one to one discussion with her State Representative. Being this was a new experience for A.L. she was a bit nervous but she ended the day feeling proud and empowered. So much so that A.L has already completed a FAVOR training for caregivers and is now organizing a Caregiver Support Group. I thank all the CT Community Nonprofit Alliance members and staff who helped to make Lobby Day so powerful for A.L. She is paying your kindness forward!

Sarah Lockery, Chief Administrator, Community Services
The Children’s Center of Hamden
27% job growth in nonprofit management

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FOR A CONSTANTLY CHANGING WORLD

Bay Path University
Our members, along with nonprofits throughout the State, are learning to evolve with the ever-changing landscape of funding while looking for new and creative ways to raise money and diversify revenue. We increasingly rely on community foundations for financial support, guidance and information.

CT Community Nonprofit Alliance partners with community foundations around Connecticut. We asked them to briefly share their observations about the changing landscape and “new normal” for funding nonprofits in Connecticut and what they are doing to meet the needs of nonprofits in their area.

Hartford Foundation for Public Giving
http://www.hfpg.org/

All nonprofit organizations require leaders who understand their roles in the governance and management of nonprofits; financial issues including their fiduciary responsibilities; technology that can help strategically convey information and data; the importance of planning for their organization’s future; evaluation processes that measure the impact of their activities; and planning for transitions of their personnel. These functions are so important that two decades ago, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving established the Nonprofit Support Program (NSP) to provide capacity building help to nonprofits in Hartford and its 28 surrounding towns.

NSP offers support to the region’s nonprofit agencies through learning opportunities, including a variety of leadership workshops and training programs; organizational assessments; planning grants; strategic technology plans and implementation funding; financial management training, assessments and grants; evaluation capacity training, grants, and roundtables; and executive transition grants. Depending on a nonprofit’s needs and individual readiness for a particular service, these resources help sustain an organization by building its organizational capacity. Detailed information on these programs can be seen at www.hfpg.org/nsp.

While each of these forms of support is critical for the survival and success of nonprofits, we would like to highlight executive leadership which was featured in Third Sector New England’s (TSNE) 2015 study, Leadership New England: Essential Shifts for a Thriving Nonprofit Sector, http://tsne.org/leadership-new-england. Surveying 1,200 nonprofit leaders, including 123 executive directors and 49 board members from Greater Hartford, the study concluded that leaders continue to be significantly challenged by such issues as governance, fundraising and leadership turnover among others. In response to the latter issue, NSP offers support for executive transitions.

The selection of the right CEO is one of the most important decisions a board must make. NSP’s Executive Transition Program helps boards navigate the complex issues related to executive turnover, identify key strategic issues and required attributes of the new leader, align board members before the search begins, and create a short-term plan for the incoming CEO. Through its partnership with TSNE, the Nonprofit Support Program delivers a comprehensive program with all of these features. TSNE provides transition services through a group of specially trained consultants who participate in an ongoing learning community about such work. By offering transition services, NSP hopes to help organizations remain stable as they undergo leadership change.

CT Community Foundation
http://www.conncf.org/

For nonprofits and funders, it is clear that we need to adjust to the changes we’ve seen locally and across the country. Last year our foundation formed a task force to look at capacity building we’ve done and research the models used in other parts of the country.

Our foundation has adopted an approach outlined in a study done by
You’re passionate about making a difference. So are we. We have professionals dedicated exclusively to non-profits, serving over 400 organizations. We fully understand the hurdles you face. We’re proactive and stay on top of emerging issues. Call partner Lori Budnick at 860-561-6828 to learn more.

Grantmakers for Effective Organizations (GEO), “Strengthening Nonprofit Capacity”. The conclusion of the study was that the most effective capacity building programs must be: Contextual-designed for the individual nonprofit, Continuous-long-term consistent support, and Collective-collaboration between foundation and nonprofit partners. GEO has labeled this set of criteria as the Three Cs:

This year our foundation is working to implement a plan to reframe all our capacity building efforts to follow the Three Cs. Through a survey and discussions with individual nonprofits, we’ve discovered that nonprofit leaders desire a deep conversation with their colleagues inside and outside the organization. There is a real need for facilitators that can guide conversations to grapple with difficult issues and give permission to think in a totally new way. We have volunteers that can facilitate meetings and we will be recruiting more to meet this need in our service area.

Providing support services beyond funding is critical to the success of our nonprofits and communities. As the economy evolves, our approach to capacity building has to constantly be updated to reach the ultimate goal of making our communities better places to live.

**Fairfield County’s Community Foundation**
http://fccfoundation.org/

Fairfield County’s Community Foundation’s ability to impact the critical needs in Fairfield County and help our community thrive is affected by the vigor of our area nonprofits. Through our Center for Nonprofit Excellence (CNE) we invest in the long-term sustainability and overall success of our community’s nonprofits, providing leadership development, valuable training, and operational resources to help nonprofit organizations meet their mission, and thus enable our communities to flourish. We believe that helping our nonprofits be more effective and developing strong nonprofit leaders amplifies our financial investment in the community. This is not a ‘new normal’ for the Community Foundation, but a reflection of a core belief and commitment that led us to create the CNE.

The rise of the millennial workforce, leadership transition and declining government dollars makes the case for deepening the commitment to capacity building by foundations and philanthropy.

- As the largest generation in the workforce, millennials want to be developed. It’s key to their job satisfaction and retention. However, many nonprofits struggle to develop their staff due to limited budgets. CNE’s model of high-value training coupled with low or no-cost fees is one important solution in the region.
• Third Sector New England’s recent research on the New England nonprofit sector shows that 60% of nonprofit leaders in CT will leave their jobs in five years and 47% will leave in the next 2 years. To prepare for this transition, nonprofits need succession plans and they need to deepen their bench strength by developing employees to increase their sustainability.

• The Connecticut state budget crisis is impacting many of our nonprofit providers. If an organization has relied on state funding, they need to re-think their business model and adapt to be sustainable. It is inevitable that organizations will experience increased pressure to measure and articulate the difference they are making. Providing organizations with the tools and resources to do this is essential.

FCCF’s Center for Nonprofit Excellence strives to improve the effectiveness of Fairfield County nonprofit organizations by developing leaders, improving operations, and fostering an environment of collaboration so that ‘together we thrive’.

The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven
http://www.cfgnh.org/

“Over the last five years, we have seen the volunteer and professional leadership of nonprofits challenged in unprecedented ways,” said Jackie Downing, Director of Grantmaking and Nonprofit Effectiveness for The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven. She added, “Declining public support, historically flat levels of private philanthropy and increasingly complex societal conditions are straining the fabric of the nonprofit sector. Organizations are coming to understand that sustainability is contingent upon a great deal more than effective programming. Driven by mission, they approach organizational capacity building with an honest commitment to self-improvement as well as an openness to exploring different business models, and collaborating and cooperating with other nonprofits in a way that will allow all to thrive. Long-established organizations as well as new organizations understand that they need tools to build infrastructure, but are reluctant to redirect limited financial resources from programming to build organizational capacity.”

To address the need, The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven has developed low- or no-cost capacity building supports resources to strengthen nonprofits to meet today’s challenges and to build strong organizations that will deliver results in the future. According to Downing, hundreds of nonprofits have taken advantage of workshops, organizational assessments, online resources, planned giving partnerships and opportunities for Board and staff peer groups to meet and share information. “This kind of programming by The Community Foundation has led to stronger relationships with organizations, which allows us to both better serve the nonprofits and to better communicate about what’s happening in our community to our donors,” said Downing.

From the TSNE Leadership New England: Essential Shifts for a Thriving Nonprofit Sector report: “But supporting nonprofits and their leaders to learn is just the start. Funders and capacity builders also need to support organizations to build higher-performing boards, create succession plans grounded in a longer-term vision for sustainability, achieve financial stability, strengthen the leadership skills of their staff, and work in more collaborative and networked contexts. Only with this kind of broad and strategic investment in the capacity of organizations and their people will the sector be able to become truly resilient, and better able to address inequities and deliver on the promise of strengthening our communities and our region for years to come.”

Joshua Lipshits,
Director of Membership
Business Development
CT Community Nonprofit Alliance, Inc.
The average cost of a claim for employers in the U.S. is $5,191. But a unique unemployment tax alternative for 501(c)(3)s can save nonprofits up to 60% on their unemployment costs.

How?

Enacted in 1972, federal law entitles 501(c)(3) organizations to opt out of their state’s unemployment insurance tax system and instead reimburse the state only when they have an unemployment claim. And when they are no longer part of the tax-rated pool, 501(c)(3) organizations can avoid the claims volatility of other associations.

However, opting out of the state unemployment tax system is NOT a good fit for every nonprofit—especially for those with high claims volatility and smaller staff sizes. To make an educated decision on whether your nonprofit should be a tax-rated employer vs. a direct reimbursing employer, it’s extremely important to benchmark your unemployment costs.

If you’re a 501(c)(3) with 10+ employees, you can submit a FREE unemployment cost analysis at www.ChooseUST.org/CTCNA and UST will provide you a 2-year savings projection (if you are determined eligible for direct reimbursement). In 2015, UST identified $6,022,190 in potential unemployment claims cost savings for 400 nonprofits.

For more than 33 years, UST has helped participating nonprofits exercise their unique tax alternative in a safe, cost-effective way. UST constantly aims to provide its members with the latest legal updates, educational resources and HR tools—all of which is designed to help nonprofits reduce costs and strengthen their missions.

UST participation gives you access to a wide variety of workforce solutions, including:
- Unemployment claims administration
- E-filing capabilities for claims details
- Live HR hotline staffed by certified professionals
- 200+ employee training courses
- Employee handbook tools
- Outplacement services

“Founded by nonprofits for nonprofits, we aim to cultivate a holistic support system that alleviates the everyday burdens nonprofits tend to face, such as paperwork deadlines, strict budgets and limited employee bandwidth,” said Donna Groh, Executive Director of UST.

UST has partnered with the Connecticut Community Nonprofit Alliance, Inc. for more than 30 years to help reach organizations like yours to keep more money within the nonprofit community. And with 160+ CT associations are already taking advantage of the UST program, aren’t you curious to find out if you could save?

If you need assistance filling out the online cost analysis form, or if you have any additional questions, please contact UST at 888-249-4788 or info@chooseust.org.

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Preferred Purchasing Program
Putting People to Work Since 1977

The Preferred Purchasing program administered by the CT Community Nonprofit Alliance facilitates the employment of individuals with disabilities. Through government contracting, community providers supply state agencies with needed products and services. Individuals with disabilities are provided with opportunities in the areas of employment, employment training, work hours and wages in a variety of work settings, including janitorial services, dry cleaning, temporary services, commercial laundry, landscaping, and manufacturing, among others.

Established in 1977, the Preferred Purchasing Program has employed thousands of individuals with disabilities in Connecticut. This year alone, the program held over one hundred sixty state contracts employing eight hundred- fifty workers with disabilities who earned nearly $3 million in wages.

The Program not only helps improve the quality of life for individuals with disabilities, but also contributes to the state economy. A 2013 national economic benefit study of similar programs indicates that Connecticut saves over $2,000 per worker employed through the program as the result of reductions in entitlement programs and increased tax payments. By putting people to work, the Preferred Purchasing program saves the state of Connecticut $1.6 million every year.

Keystone House

On May 3, the evening before the session closed, I rode in a van with some great people from Keystone House for a “Visibility Shift” at the capitol. On our long ride to Hartford we talked about what was happening with the state budget, how our state was in a fiscal crisis and everyone’s fears about budget cuts.

When we arrived at the capitol, we were greeted by CT Community Nonprofit Alliance staff and given #PeopleMatter stickers. I could not think of a better name for our advocacy work. We talked to our legislators and gave a shout out to Governor Malloy as he flew by followed by a gaggle of reporters. Probably the best part of our trip was the next day when everyone was sharing stories of who they talked to and how the legislators thanked them for coming up to Hartford, we even had a special meeting with a State Senator in his office!

I know it is hard to quantify the effect this type of advocacy has on the budget process but I do know that we were visible and we could not be ignored.

Valerie Williams, Executive Director
Keystone House, Inc.

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The 2016 Legislative Session opened on Wednesday, February 3 with Governor Malloy’s release of his proposed midterm budget adjustments for state fiscal year 2017. Seeking to address a nearly $1 billion budget shortfall, the Governor called for significant budget policy changes and deep spending cuts to community nonprofits.

Since finalizing a merger on February 1st between CCPA and CT Nonprofits, CT Community Nonprofit Alliance was ready to fight to protect services, and so were our 550 member organizations. In our first press event, we warned that the Governor’s proposed budget would devastate human service programs and curtail or completely eliminate essential services for thousands of individuals across the state, including many supported by the Governor himself. We emphasized how, if passed, the Governor’s budget would have left children, families, and adults who rely on life-sustaining services with nowhere to turn.

As the legislative session progressed, state revenue projections continued to fall. Opposing ideas on addressing the budget shortfall resulted in an additional seven alternative budget proposals by the Governor, Democrats, and Republicans. By the constitutionally mandated deadline to end the legislative session on May 4, a budget agreement had yet to be reached, requiring the legislature to convene a special session dedicated to addressing the budget shortfall, budget implementation bill, and other bills of interest.

At each step of the way, the strength of our collective voice was more important than ever to advocate for adequate funding in the budget and to make sure we were a key part of the decision making process. We maintained a constant presence at the Legislative Office Building and Capitol, speaking with legislators about how community nonprofits deliver the most cost-effective and efficient services, and are a vital part of making Connecticut a place where people want to live and raise families.

Our efforts were rewarded as the final budget compromise reached by Democratic legislative leaders and the Governor restored some of the more drastic cuts recommended in earlier budgets, allowing many programs to continue to provide life-sustaining services to some of the state’s most at-risk individuals. The budget also included painful spending reductions to programs that serve people with intellectual disabilities, mental illness and addictions, and services that help people coming out of prison to become productive members of the community. But the majority of the cuts were mitigated thanks to our members’ tireless advocacy.

In addition to the budget, legislative initiatives also made their way through the usual vetting process of public hearings and committee referrals. Approximately 1,110 bills were introduced and only 347 passed the General Assembly. These bills have either been signed by the Governor or are presently awaiting his action. CT Community Nonprofit Alliance staff tracked over 250 bills of interest and facilitated the delivery of over 50 pieces of testimony on issues important to our members.

Brunilda Ferraj, MSW  
Senior Public Policy Specialist  
CT Community Nonprofit Alliance
On March 16th, more than 500 people climbed the hill to the Connecticut State Capitol. Wearing blue stickers, they were there to tell lawmakers that #PeopleMatter. They were staff, volunteers and consumers of services from across the state. Some live with disabilities, or have loved ones that do. Some are among the 20% of the country that has a mental illness. Many spend their careers caring for others. All were there to fight back against significant budget cuts to the human services sector.

The #PeopleMatter coalition was born in 2015 as a unified voice to call on lawmakers to fully fund human services, services that are at the core of our society. The coalition is made up of a number of CT Community Nonprofit Alliance members, SEIU Local 1199, Our Families Can’t Wait, DDS Families First, Connecticut Family Service Agencies and many more.

Like in 2015, the #PeopleMatter Coalition was a constant presence at the legislature this session. And like in 2015, we were effective in reversing the most devastating cuts proposed by Governor Malloy.

But this year, we went beyond the legislature. In April, CT Community Nonprofit Alliance filmed seven videos at our offices in Rocky Hill. They represented people with disabilities, mental illness and people coming out of the prison system. We put them on Facebook and they went viral. Bill, who has paranoid schizophrenia and substance use disorders, told his story and more than 2,000 people watched. Fred, who served time in prison and now works for Family ReEntry in Bridgeport shared his story with almost 3,000. Troy, who lives in a group home told almost 3,500 people that the services he receives help him fly. Altogether, the #PeopleMatter videos have been watched more than 18,000 times since they launched in mid-April.

What is most special, though, is its working. Because of your advocacy, we have champions in both parties and both houses of the legislature. #PeopleMatter members passed a bill this year that enhances communication between the Department of Developmental Services and families on the waiting list for services. The budget that passed the legislature on May 13th reduced the cuts that were proposed by Governor Malloy. And we’re not done. It is Election Season in Connecticut. CT Community Nonprofit Alliance and the #PeopleMatter Coalition will be organizing candidate forums across the state to educate the next class of legislators this Summer and Fall. Together, we can continue to work to make a difference.

Ben Shaiken,
Public Policy Specialist
CT Community Nonprofit Alliance
This on-going column is dedicated to questions and answers to simple and complex nonprofit governance challenges. Please send your questions to mikeb@bwbsolutions.com.

**Question:** It often feels that I and my board “don’t understand our purpose and our job.” What might we do about this?

**Answer:** Kudos to you that you and your board members are acknowledging you may not have all the knowledge, experience and/or expertise to be as effective as you believe you could or should be.

Rest assured that there is no reason to believe that you, a nonprofit’s “owners”, can instantly or always understand how best to address the ordinary and extraordinary roles, responsibilities and tasks that arise throughout your tenure. Fiduciary duties, finance and compliance matters, and, even committee and meeting management are not generally the subjects taught in high school and for most, college.

The first step you should do is to take time to assess what your board needs to know and do to be “best in show” with particular attention to your board’s stage of development.

If you do not already have one in place, consider a standing Governance Committee as the portal for all things about being a great board: recruitment, orientation, mentoring, training, and evaluation.

But even with a Governance Committee the need for advice will likely be necessary but is often only a phone call, e-directory, community foundation or even peer reference away. Referred to as capacity building, there are plenty of free and paid resources from which to choose.

First, there is printed and on-line literature like that from BoardSource.org which can be found by doing an internet search or going to the public library (nonprofit resources section).

Free “live” assistance from individuals, maybe even from within your organization, that have a longer history or have gone through similar experiences or maybe have special expertise (e.g. Pro Bono Partnership) may prove a helpful resource as trainers, mentors and coaches. Similarly, peer-to-peer events, these days often organized by community foundations and chambers, may prove helpful learning resources.

Strategic and other planning and evaluation tasks (like maybe whether to merge or not) are events when professional assistance may be more efficient and effective to support a smooth process and provide or collect content.

Nonprofit governing, like many tasks, is not to be taken as a given that just because you have the job means that you individually or collectively fully understand how to succeed in the job. There are plenty of resources. Winging-it is not an acceptable option. Your customers, donors, and staff really need you to be capable.

Mike Burns is a partner in BWB Solutions where he helps nonprofits with organizational development and planning needs, including assessing their readiness for mergers and revenue generating ventures. He writes the http://www.nonprofitboardcrisis.typepad.com/blog.
Marrakech, Inc.

My 30 years of Connecticut non-profit experience led me to work with several iterations of The CT Community Nonprofit Alliance (CT Nonprofit Alliance): CARF, CONARF, CT Nonprofits and CCPA. Although this year’s State Budget negotiations seemed to be the worst ever, through the CT Nonprofit Alliance, I was kept up to date and given clear directions about how I could best advocate for the people we support, families, staff and my organization. I found over the years that simply complaining, feeling helpless and hoping things would work out are not effective. CT Nonprofit Alliance assisted us by coordinating our participation in the Lobby Days, CT Nonprofits Week at the Capitol and smaller legislative meetings outside of the LOB.

CT Nonprofit Alliance helped develop an extremely effective way to discuss individual issues with our legislators. While many of the Marrakech stakeholders were not able to carve out time for the visibility shifts that were strategically planned, their individual messages were delivered by me in notes that were prepared for their legislators. With assistance from Ben, CT Nonprofit Alliance staff, I was able not only to hand deliver messages, but to also have one to one conversations with each of our Senators and Representatives, to discuss how their constituents are effected by the budget (while staff took pictures of these interactions). I was also able to discuss our agency’s efforts in providing cost effective quality supports for people, therefore being a solution to the budget crisis.

I am confident that the CT Nonprofit Alliance has the strongest team of professionals (staff and consultants) who are well equipped to successfully navigate our legislative process, and more importantly, assist us in our advocacy efforts on behalf of the 500,000 + people we support and the countless other Connecticut citizens who do not yet receive the supports they need.

Heather LaTorra, President and CEO Marrakech, Inc.

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John M. Horak
Chair, Nonprofit Organizations Practice Area

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According to the National Council of Nonprofits, Nonprofits are not just organizations - they are the face of our communities. ‘Nonprofits embody the best spirit and values of our nation. They help millions of individuals and families on a daily basis. They protect, feed, heal, shelter, educate, and nurture our bodies and spirits. Nonprofits also give shape to our boldest dreams, highest ideals, and noblest causes. They turn our beliefs into action - as promoters of democracy, champions of the common good, incubators of innovation, laboratories of leadership, protectors of taxpayers, responders in times of trouble, stimulators of the economy, and weavers of community fabric.’

Within the scope of the national conversation regarding the value and impact of the nonprofit sector, Connecticut’s nonprofit organizations matter. More than ever - Nonprofit Advocacy matters. Period. This year marked the TENTH ANNIVERSARY of one of the CT Nonprofit Alliance’s most widely recognized events: ‘CT Nonprofit Alliance Week at the Capitol’ during February and April at the Legislative Office Building (LOB) in Hartford. This flagship event provides the opportunity for 100 organizations exhibiting over the course of two, week-long events, to collectively highlight the scope and impact of work that nonprofits do to enhance the quality of life for all citizens of our state. It is a time to educate policy makers and the public, regarding the exceptional work of each individual organization, and their contributions to the collective impact of all.

We are grateful to Governor Malloy, Lieutenant Governor Wyman, and the many Legislators who exhibited their commitment to the nonprofit community by attending CT Nonprofit Alliance Week at the Capitol 2016! The event continues to grow each year, with ever-increasing engagement among the membership and the Legislature. This year, more than ever, social media played a key role in terms of connecting exhibitors with their legislators and their communities. In addition, Legislators have begun not only to anticipate the annual event, but to promote their participation and support via social media as well! The CT Nonprofit Alliance continues to provide participants with advance promotion of the event, advocacy materials and helpful strategies for engaging their elected officials, Board members and stakeholders. Among the most important components to a truly successful event, is the intensity with which our member participants actively pursue both personal and professional relationships with their Legislators. This includes correspondence in advance of the event, and extends far beyond the event, into an ongoing relationship which is mutually beneficial. Due to the ever-changing time constraints for Legislators during Session, the two-week event will invariably include an occasional day with reduced ‘traffic’ in the Concourse. However, exhibitors have frequently noted that during these ‘slower’ times, they are afforded the opportunity not only to engage with each other and develop lasting partnerships, but to utilize the ‘Leave Behind’ messaging system provided by CT Nonprofit Alliance, to a greater extent, which yields long-term opportunities for engagement with the Legislature.

The CT Nonprofit Alliance greatly appreciates the extraordinary efforts of those who participated in 2016, representing all members of the Nonprofit Provider network. We look forward to building on our previous success in 2017!

For additional information, please contact Julia Wilcox, Senior Public Policy Specialist at 860.525.5080 ext.1025 or JWilcox@ctnonprofitalliance.org.

CT Nonprofit Alliance Weeks at the Capitol
10th Year Anniversary
‘State of the Sector’

By Julia Wilcox, Senior Public Policy Specialist, CT Nonprofit Alliance
The CT Nonprofit Center beginnings can be traced back to a small conference room on the outskirts of Hartford. This was before the Center had an experienced partner like the Corporation of Independent Living to help build a beautiful space out of an old screw factory, creating a home for our nonprofit partners out of Hartford’s industrial past. This was before there were any commitments from local nonprofit organizations to be a part of this exciting collaborative experience. And it was before two statewide associations came together with an ambitious plan to join forces to create a new and powerful convening entity that gives a collective voice to the nonprofits in Connecticut.

Five years later, the CT Nonprofit Center stands as a state of the art hub that is the home to 26 unique nonprofits, all of who benefit from affordable space, difference making technology and other shared services designed to strengthen the efficiency, effectiveness and capacity of our tenant organizations.

Progress has been made quickly. The original strategic plan called for the Center to be at full capacity by the end of the year 2018. We met that goal in only 18 months. With momentum building and excitement growing, the Center leadership is working hard to find new ways to increase efficiencies and impact.

The Center offers below market rental rates and also reduces organizations overall need for space by offering shared conference rooms, a kitchen and reception area. Tenants also share copiers, a postage machine, high speed internet and a phone system. Nonprofits in the center are then able to take all the savings they accrue from residing in a shared space and reallocate that money back into their programming, furthering the missions of the organizations and the Center.

A new way in which the Center expects to
make an impact on the nonprofits who call it home is by leveraging technology to save both money and time. Through a generous technology grant from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, the Center now has the ability to live stream meetings. This opens up a whole host of opportunities for tenants. Center organizations will be able to save staff and board members time by hosting virtual meetings, increase the amount of people they serve by live streaming workshops over the internet, and some organizations will be able to add a new revenue stream by offering trainings for purchase on demand.

In addition to finding new ways to help nonprofits save, another major focus of the next phase of the CT Nonprofit Center is to create a more collaborative environment, one in which each organization feels a sense ownership over the center. We have created three committees made up of representatives from different organizations who volunteer their time to help increase center engagement, work on logistical issues such as parking and security and plan events to bring our Center community members together. This has helped to deepen the connections between Center organizations and we hope that it will eventually lead to programmatic collaboration.

We have already begun to see results. This past April the Discovery Center and Everyday Democracy co-sponsored an event for the YWCA’s “Stand Against Racism” campaign. Both organizations focus on social justice issues and quickly realized that instead of hosting two separate events, they could make a greater impact by collaborating on one program. The day was a great success as the organizations filled one of the conference rooms for a presentation on Racism 101. Remarkably, because of the power of collaboration and the leadership provided by both the Discovery Center and Everyday Democracy, 11 out of the 39 participating organizations in the statewide “Stand Against Racism” campaign were from the CT Nonprofit Center.

It’s a very exciting time to be a part of the Center. Our community is learning how to better work together to achieve greater results and our shared services are saving time and money, allowing for more organizational impact and less operational imprints.

If your nonprofit is considering moving within the next five years and you are interested in joining the center, please contact us for more information. Over the next five years, we will be replacing current for-profit tenants with nonprofit Center members as their leases expire. The Center is currently home to 26 nonprofits occupying. We anticipate by the end of five years we will be between 30 and 40 nonprofits strong with more than 300 employees. Please consider joining and/or supporting the CT Nonprofits’ Center.

For more information please contact Josh Lipshitz at jlpshitz@ctnonprofitalliance.org or 860-525-5080 ext. 1014.
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Should your Agency be Afraid of HRA’s?

Stephen J. Repka II
eBenefits Group Northeast / Advanced Benefit Strategies

With the ever increasing cost of health insurance, everyone is looking for the perfect solution – better coverage at a lower cost for both your agency and for your staff. For many, this seemingly impossible feat has been accomplished through Health Reimbursement Arrangements (HRA’s).

First of all, what is an HRA? An HRA allows employers to reimburse employees for eligible expenses when and if they occur. It is perfectly legal under Section 105 of the IRS code. It actually has been available for years and with the increasing “out-of-pocket” costs incurred under today’s health insurance plans, HRA’s have been revived and are now very popular. These are not to be confused with Health Saving Accounts (HSA’s) which must be combined with a High Deductible Health Plan. An HRA can be utilized with any type of health plan.

The way an HRA works is that an employer selects a plan with increased co-pays, deductibles and/or maximum out-of-pocket costs. By selecting the higher out-of-pocket plan, the premium typically is substantially lower. We then take the savings of the plan with the lower cost and reserve these savings to help reimburse your employee a portion of, or all of, the co-pay, deductible and maximum out-of-pocket costs as they are incurred. This allows the employer and the employee (if they are contributing towards the monthly premium) to realize the savings of lower premium costs while still maintaining the higher level of benefits. It’s a win-win!

Don’t worry about this becoming an administrative nightmare.
burden, the plan administrator, Advanced Benefit Strategies (ABS) takes care of everything. ABS has been proud to be an endorsed vendor for over a decade now and has had the pleasure to assist many of your colleagues within the nonprofit sector. The employee submits a reimbursement form directly to ABS and the reimbursement check is sent to the employee’s home. This leaves the employer out of the loop while maintaining HIPAA regulations.

There are different plans under the IRS codes that when paired with your health insurance plan can result in substantial savings. Please look forward to our next article when we take the fear out of HSA’s! If you have any questions, or would like to discuss this or any other issues you may have pertaining to employee benefits, please contact us.

Stephen J. Repka II
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Think of us as an extension of your team.

The Voice of Community Nonprofits

For over thirty-five years, CT Community Nonprofit Alliance has championed its members and proudly served as the leading source of support in the sector.

Count on us to respond to change, facilitate relationships, provide informative updates, offer cost-effective products, promote the public good and protect your interests.

Expect accurate support from our dedicated staff, the opportunity to reach new audiences and the influence of joining a unified voice.

Not currently a member of CT Nonprofit Alliance?
Call us today at 860.525.5080 x1014 to explore benefits created with your organization in mind.

www.ctnonprofitalliance.org
Being a member of CT Community Nonprofit Alliance gives you access to the combined buying power of more than 500 nonprofit organizations.

For more information on our products, preferred vendor services & membership with CT Nonprofit Alliance, please contact Joshua Lipshitz at jlipshitz@ctnonprofitalliance.org or 860.525.5080 x1014.
Check out all of our Summer 2016 Trainings online!

August 2016

August 2 | KEYS TO BETTER BUSINESS AND PERSONAL COMMUNICATION: READING PEOPLE AND REMEMBERING WHAT THEY SAID!
9:00 am – 12:00 pm | CT Nonprofit Center, Hartford

August 3 | CUSTOMIZING YOUR GRANT PROPOSAL TO MEET FINDERS’ NEEDS
9:00 am – 12:00 pm | CT Nonprofit Center, Hartford

August 9 | EXPLORING THE POWER OF LEADERSHIP VISION
9:00 am – 12:00 pm | CT Nonprofit Center, Hartford

August 11th & 18th | MANAGEMENT SKILLS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANTS AND SUPPORT STAFF
9:00 am – 12:00 pm | CT Nonprofit Center, Hartford

August 31 | ONLINE AND SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY
9:30 am – 11:30 am | CT Nonprofit Center, Hartford

To view upcoming training, register online or download a registration form, visit us at www.ccpa-inc.org