

# Philanthropy Journal

OF NORTH CAROLINA

High-stakes sector

## Burnout takes toll on nonprofit leaders, programs

While the problem of burnout is a much-talked-about issue in the nonprofit sector, nonprofit leaders say it too often is ignored in favor of other concerns.

By BARBARA SOLOW

Nan Holbrook Griswold keeps a list of behavioral "don'ts" on the wall of her office at the Food Bank of Northwest North Carolina in Winston-Salem.

The list is a reminder of conduct that can lead to burnout. Among the behaviors and attitudes she seeks to avoid are "illusions of control," "perfectionism" and "tunnel vision."

When she talks about burnout,

### MANAGING

Griswold uses language associated with 12-step recovery programs. And that's no accident.

Five years ago, she had a mild stroke while working on a capital campaign for the food bank. While Griswold's stroke was not directly caused by her job, the experience led her to reexamine her habits and address what she describes as a classic case of workaholicism.

"There truly is a work addiction in nonprofits," Griswold says. "Work addiction is the only addiction you get praised for. I'm also a challenge addict - give me a challenge and I'm

going to do it. But what you find is that you start to lose your productivity and your creativity when you try to do too much."

Doing too much is a well-known occupational hazard in the nonprofit sector - experienced by everyone from volunteer board members to executive directors to staff.

But while individuals have tried to address the problem by venting to co-workers, finding outside hobbies or - as Griswold did - taking advantage of foundation-sponsored sabbatical programs - the sector as a whole has tended to avoid solutions.

Nonprofit leaders know they are ignoring the issue of burnout at their peril.

"We're losing a lot of people," says Annette Smith, who directs the Carrboro-based North Carolina Alliance for Arts Education. "I can think of six peers in the arts that are no longer working in the field and have no intention of ever working in the field again because of the burnout."

In an era when nonprofits are being called upon to do more with fewer resources, many worry that burnout could become even more common.

"If we continue with our present

pattern of organizing our work in the sector and we have these increasing demands from government program shifts, it's going to be an extraordinary challenge for the leadership of organizations," says Valeria Lee, program officer for the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation in Winston-Salem.

A number of people interviewed for this story agreed to speak only on

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New markets

## The arts take on tough leading role

This article is the second in a series that will examine the response of nonprofit leaders to the new priorities of policy leaders in Washington and Raleigh. The topic is also the focus of Philanthropy '96, the state's annual nonprofit conference, sponsored by the Philanthropy Journal.

By SEAN BAILEY

We have the arts to thank for keeping things tense.

For some, there always seems to be another public art project to squawk about, another movie to picket, another rapper release to consider censoring.

Art, at the edge of its creation, at its moment of inception, often stirs our passions, challenges our values and even threatens our view of the world. So it's not surprising that art often elicits a strong reaction.

Essayist E. Louis Lankford describes the tense and complicated relationship between art and society as one "brimming with misunderstanding, arrogance and suspicion."

But for all the heat that surrounds the arts, the truth is that from large cities like Charlotte to small towns like Garner, the arts are thriving in North Carolina. Whether it's museums, galleries, and performing arts centers, or poetry readings, dance performances and art classes, the home state of the leading opponent of public-supported arts, Jesse Helms, seems engaged in a full-fledged celebration of the arts.

### THE NEXT REVOLUTION

"It's not the sense of gloom and doom that someone might think from reading the paper," says Robert Maddrey, president of Arts North Carolina, an association for state arts groups.

Arts groups have a great advantage over other types of nonprofit organizations: The arts are fun. That's probably the arts' great strength. People enjoy attending many varied events. Wealthy contributors relish being associated with symphonies, operas and playhouses.

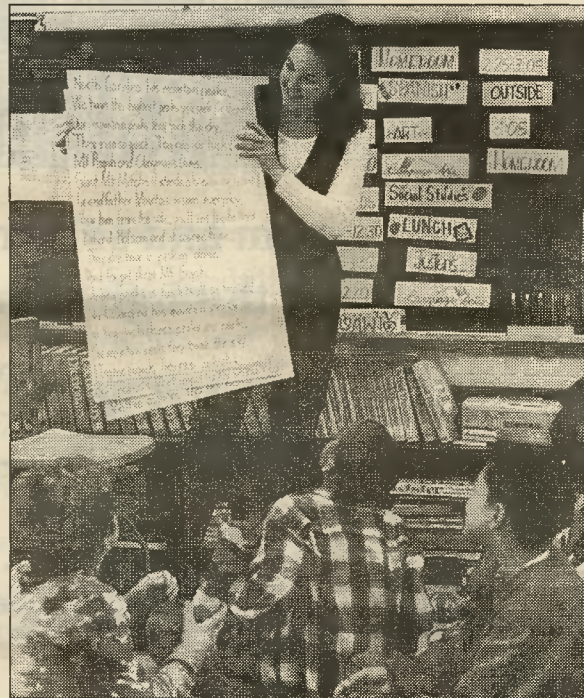
Still, the arts do not exist in a vacuum. The current political and economic environment affects the arts just like nonprofits in other fields. And as arts leaders plan how to guide their organizations through the last half of this decade, they realize they must confront key issues regarding how to improve public awareness of their work, develop better funding sources, collaborate within and across sectors, and prove that their programs are successful.

### IMPROVING AWARENESS

It's ironic that the arts have a problem with their message. The one segment of the nonprofit world that is purposefully engaged in communicating with the public as its primary mission, in fact, faces serious challenges about how the public views its work and mission.

"There's a perception that the arts, and the people who work with arts organizations, are somehow outside the gen-

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The arts are part of learning at Bugg Elementary in Raleigh. Here, Jacqueline Jordan and her 4th grade class make up a rhyme as part of a map lesson.



As Rudolph the Reindeer, Christy Davenport (left) and other Bugg special-education students rehearse for performance at a Garner senior citizens center.

Photos by Elaine Westarp

Successful track record

## Cutbacks spotlight community development

Community development's integrated approach to improving social and economic conditions in poor neighborhoods may attract more attention as government reduces its role in many social programs.

By MERRILL WOLF

For nearly three decades, community development corporations - nonprofit organizations run by residents of poor, usually African-American neighborhoods - have quietly and successfully tackled many seemingly intractable problems in both urban and rural America.

Each year, they build or rehabilitate hundreds of thousands of homes for people who otherwise could not afford them; provide job training and create tens of thousands of jobs for the chronically unemployed; and generally take on the work of restoring hope to dying communities.

The many tangible achievements of community development corporations - or CDCs - have gone largely unnoticed by mainstream society, but their relative anonymity may end soon.

At a November meeting in Durham, the director of their national trade association told representatives of North Carolina's CDCs to prepare for the limelight.

Stephen Glaude, president of the National Congress for Community Economic Development

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The African-American Dance Ensemble in Durham hopes to shed the tumult of staff turnover and a serious cash-flow crisis.

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A sustainable-agriculture coalition hopes to identify common problems and support local initiatives to look for solutions.

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A network of nonprofit stores is forging links between Third World artisans and consumers in the developed world.

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P.D. Williams has spent hundreds of hours helping the state's Support Our Students after-school program take root.

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#### Olympic fundraisers find corporate gold

This summer's Olympic Games in Atlanta present fundraisers with a task of Olympian proportion.

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