

YOUTH

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We have a unique perspective. Listen to us."

Most of the nearly 700 conference participants, who represented nonprofits and foundations from throughout the U.S., embraced the youthful message. They cheered the young speakers and praised their wealth of nonprofit work, which ranges from the founding of an AIDS hotline to the publication of a community magazine.

"It's so thrilling to be in the presence of such great hope," said Anne Cohn Donnelly, executive director of the National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse; after she was introduced by 17-year-old Janet Brito - a Chicago high school student and volunteer. "Janet, it's people like you, who are our future. Thank you so much."

Some nonprofit officials went so far as to invite youngsters attending the conference to join their nonprofit boards. Jeremy Graham, a 23-year-old intern in Raleigh with North Carolina Public Allies, was tapped at the conference to serve on the advisory board on rural youth issues for Future Farmers of America.

"I think that the conference highlighted issues that are about the survival of the independent sector," said Jason Scott, director of North Carolina Public Allies. "There needs to be a diversification of the leadership of the sector as the demographics of the country are changing. ... I think the conference really changed

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JASON SCOTT

Director
North Carolina Public Allies
Durham



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One band of eager young people wearing yellow badges stenciled with the logo "Youth on Board," worked conference ballrooms, speaking out on the need for nonprofits and foundations to include young people on their boards.

"It's so important to include young people on boards of nonprofits, especially those with missions that deal with youth," said Karen Young, director of Youth on Board, a nonprofit based in Somerville, Mass.

Not all participants warmly welcomed the focus on youth. Some bristled in the face of the outspokenness of some of the young participants.

"What's up with this youth

thing?", one participant asked during a dinner discussion overheard by a North Carolina nonprofit director.

Vanessa Kirsch, the 29-year-old founder and president of Washington-based Public Allies, suggested that some adults may have been frustrated by some of the more outspoken youth. Public Allies, which has branches throughout the U.S., works to cultivate young leaders by placing them in paid internships with government or nonprofit organizations.

"Sometimes, we [young people] forget to acknowledge those who came before us," Kirsch said during a panel discussion called "Celebrating Intergenerational Collaboration in Our Sector." Several



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VANESSA KIRSCH

Founder and President
Public Allies
Washington, D.C.

young participants has just criticized what they view as "ageism," or discrimination based on age.

"I was at a meeting once," Kirsch said, "and turned to a woman beside me and said, 'So what can I learn from you?' She looked at me and said, 'To say, 'Thank you.' I sat down and thought, 'Geez, what's her problem?'"

"But I realize now that she had an important point. We do need to say 'thank you' and recognize the efforts of those who came before us. We think sometimes the world began when we were born."

Most nonprofit participants at the meeting had more praise than criticism.

Elizabeth Locke, director of edu-

cation and communications at the Duke Endowment in Charlotte, said the young leaders inspired her.

"There's an enormous amount of talent," she said. "I was inspired by their presence and what they're doing. The discouraging thing is when we have this kind of talent and interest in working for the public good and there are no jobs. Why can't we find employment?"

Independent Sector elected two young adults - Kirsch and Jeffrey Trujillo, 24, a program officer for the El Pomar Foundation in Colorado - to its board of directors during the meeting.

And Independent Sector leaders promised to follow up the meeting

LEADERS

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ing, collaboration, community-building and dealing with the life-cycles of nonprofits.

"Nonprofits start as entrepreneurs," said Bill Spencer, president of the Foundation for the Carolinas and a participant in the retreat. "But we often see that success traps them."

Corinne Allen, executive director of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Education Foundation said nonprofits must deal with a rapidly changing environment.

"Nonprofits, like for-profits, are in a state of flux, needing to deal with change and technology."

The recent five-hour brainstorming session will be followed by creation of a board of advisers, as well as task forces and focus groups. They will try to refine the ideas raised at the retreat and develop a mission for the proposed nonprofit program.

The followup meetings also will be looking at existing programs that provide nonprofit studies and leadership training, such as Duke University's continuing education program in nonprofit management

and the Center for Creative Leadership in Greensboro.

Edwards, the School of Social Work dean, says the aim of the new program will be to complement those existing programs and not to duplicate them. People attending the retreat had numerous questions about how the program at UNC-CH might tie into or learn from the one at Duke. Representatives of Duke's program, however, were not invited to the retreat.

Jill Gammon is coordinating planning for the new program at UNC-CH. For information, call her in Raleigh at (919) 787-7499.

"Leaders can be very quiet. Leaders are people who promote and develop other people and give credit to other people."

This change may be what has fueled new leadership programs, such as Leadership North Carolina, a statewide program in Greensboro, and the Wildacres Leadership Initiative, sponsored by the Blumenthal Foundation in Charlotte, to seek out a diversity of participants in their leadership programs.

Both programs aim to bring together people from all walks of life and from the for-profit as well as the nonprofit sectors. Both look for people who are leaders in many different capacities.

Clay Thorp, executive director of Wildacres, says developing strong leaders now is an investment in the future of the state.

"The demands of the 21st Century in terms of multiculturalism and technological change require that we invest a lot now in terms of who will be leading in the future."

While many nonprofits are taking advantage of the new leadership programs, high costs and business-oriented programs discourage some nonprofits from participating.

For example, only 3 percent of organizations that participated in the Center for Creative Leadership's programs during 1993 identified themselves as nonprofits.

Even the smaller programs sponsored by chambers of commerce tend to attract those working in the for-

profit sector. Although Leadership Carteret attracts a few participants from the nonprofit sector, Cindy Ferguson, membership and special projects director for the program, characterizes it as "basically a business class."

Programs that offer free participation or programs that are working hard to establish a diverse network of participants from throughout the state could be changing the landscape of leadership development in North Carolina.

Changing concepts of leadership that break away from the traditional might open the doors to people working in nonprofits who previously may not have been identified as leaders.

"All of us have leadership [potential]," says Brinkley of the Western North Carolina Development Association. "Unless we're given the skills or opportunity, we may not develop it."

Although programs are adapting to changing needs, some participants are critical of a lack of opportunity to put the skills they learn into action in the programs themselves.

Andrea Harris, executive director of the Institute for Minority Economic Development in Raleigh, has participated in several programs. Although she recognizes a need for leadership development, she finds it disappointing that, "The training programs are not tied to anything else. You can step inside these programs, but they're not connected to anything larger."

PROGRAMS

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Colorado and Belgium. The center's Corporate Program teaches basic leadership skills and costs \$4,500 for a six-day training session.

In addition to local and statewide programs, there are programs tailored for specific groups of people. For example, NC Equity, a Raleigh-based women's advocacy center, runs the Women's Agenda Program and the Women of Color Leadership Institute.

Similarly, the NC Rural Economic Development Center in Raleigh sponsors the Rural Economic Development Institute for rural leaders involved in rural economic development.

Overall, methods for teaching leadership are changing, says Katherine Knott, program associate for the Center for Creative Leadership.

"We're moving from a top-down approach [to leadership] to a more team-oriented, participatory approach."

Similarly, ideas about who can be a leader are changing.

Leaders are no longer seen as outspoken, outgoing people, says Pat Brinkley, president of the Western North Carolina Development Association and graduate of the Rural Economic Development Institute.

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