

Sticking your neck out

'Giraffes' help build nonprofit sector

In the 1950s, one man came to a small village in Northern Russia to buy a house and begin a new life. The village had only 50 cottages, and no nearby well or river. People who lived there had to go five miles for water. The new resident didn't like the situation, so he made a pond that everyone in the village could use. He went to Moscow to a large research marine institute, bought fish and stocked the pond, which also served as a place for children to swim. The pond was so clean that people from other villages would come for fresh water. People could use the pond for free; the man wanted only to do something good for others.

He is what has become known in Russia as a "giraffe."

Indeed, "Stick your neck out!" has become the rallying cry of a nonprofit movement that was born in the U.S. in 1980 and came to Russia in 1989. The movement aims to recognize people who do good for others - despite the loss of their free time and the risk to their health and even their lives.

These people are called "Giraffes" because they have stuck their necks out to do something unusual that other people might not have thought to do. They also paid attention to problems that other people may not have noticed or not had time to deal with.

"Giraffes are not heroes or very religious people, although some of them believe in God," says Natasha Gromova, executive director of the Giraffe Project in Russia. "Everybody becomes a Giraffe when he takes part in voluntary work."

But people whom we call Giraffes spend a lot of their time and energy

Olga Alexeeva is an information and research officer in the Russian office of the London-based Charities Aid Foundation. She recently spent a month as an intern for the Philanthropy Journal through the Central and Eastern European Internship Program of the National Forum Foundation in Washington.

doing good and receive great pleasure from it. This pleasure is the only profit they get from their work."

Here are some examples of Russians singled out as "Giraffes."

THE RESCUER

Andrei Terentiev has worked as a volunteer rescue worker for 10 years. During the Spitak earthquake in Armenia in December 1988, he saved 37 people from death by pulling them out from ruined buildings. He took part in rescue operations in Georgia, in Iran and in eastern Russia. In the corner of his living room, a large rucksack with rescue worker equipment is always packed for an emergency trip.

"I cannot even give a clear answer about why I try to be the first at a place of disaster," he says. "This is part of my life. I like it. You can call it a special sort of individual gratification."

THE CORRESPONDENT

Another Russian Giraffe lacks Andrei's physical size or strength, and does not risk her life to help other people. She only writes letters - 100 every week to elderly women all over Russia. These women, like their 77-year-old correspondent Faina Chistiakova, passed through Stalin's labor camps in the 1930s and '40s. Some spent as much as 25 to 30 years in the camps. Many lost families, property and any belief in human kindness.

In her short letters, Faina Chistiakova asks simple questions to reassure her fellow survivors of the camps that they are not alone: "How is your old cat? Did you take him to visit a pet doctor?"

THE BASEMENT

Moscow has a small theater, called the Basement, that is located in the deep basement of an old house in the center of the city. All the actors are children ages 8 years to 16 years old. Some are handicapped, some have chronic diseases, some are "at risk."

Last year, after performing "The Diary of Anne Frank," a play about the life and death of a Jewish family in Amsterdam during World War II,

the young troupe won both local acclaim and problems with nationalist groups that threatened to kill actors for a staging "pro-Jewish performance."

But nationalistic threats have not stopped the youngsters, most of whom have performed with other teenagers from different sides of national conflicts: Armenian and Azerbaïdganian, Georgian and Abhas. In those cases, the adversaries were hostile on the first day of the performances, but grew to understand one another by the time the performances ended.

UNSUNG HEROES

About 200 Giraffes have been recognized in Russia. All of them have received certificates honoring them for sticking their necks out and signed by Andrei Danilenko, president of the Russian Giraffe project. Russian newspapers also publish stories about the activities of the Giraffes, and run media campaigns to find money to support these unsung heroes.

Moscow also has a Giraffes club that has meetings twice a year in different parts of the country.

During its first four years, the Giraffe project had an office and paid staff that looked for new Giraffes, and organized media campaigns and club meetings. Now, because of funding problems, former staff members serve as volunteers, working out of their own apartments.

Russian Giraffes are the first real volunteers in the country who worked on the basis of their own choice and without pressure from the Communist Party.

During the years of Communist rule, work in Russia was a matter of forced voluntarism. People worked for free - effectively serving as slaves - because the party demanded it. Not working meant death or removal from society.

Today, as Russia's nonprofit sector struggles to build itself from the ground up, volunteers are held in high regard as heroes who embrace both the right and the obligation to help people in need.

and supported primarily at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and North Carolina State University. Some of this research could be conducted at historically black schools - particularly as it relates to the highly-touted Smart Start program.

Funds could be targeted for historically black schools to develop early childhood teaching methods, with a priority on the preparation of economically-disadvantaged children for the 21st Century. Why not forge a working relationship with the state divisions of child development and social services and the Department of Public Instruction?

Adequate resources could be provided to ensure that historically black schools' educational missions reflect a concern for quality and equality. In doing so, funders could help increase and expand the pool of minority students, especially males, going into the teaching profession.

Among the action steps:

- Involve historically black schools as lead institutions for research, advocacy and training for minority, economically-disadvantaged pre-school children.

- Identify historically black schools that can assist the state Department of Human Resources and the North Carolina Partnership for Children in coordinating Smart Start and other pre-school programs.

- Call for funding to help historically black schools expand the pool of minority teachers with degrees in early childhood education and other areas lacking an adequate minority presence.

Historically black schools, because of the influence they wield and the trust they have gained in the black community, could play an increasing role in the state's pre-school education policy development process. By 200, as educational policy analysts note, the population of most of North Carolina's public schools will increasingly be made up of minority students. Yet far too many of today's economically-disadvantaged children are leaving school ill-prepared for the future.

One of the solutions to the problem that may not have been adequately explored is the development of collaborative activities between funders, state and local government and historically black schools.



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ity contracts are rather common in North Carolina, the law is silent regarding such agreements. It is probably safe to say that North Carolina charities would have preferred greater guidance in this area. But letting the sleeping dog lie seemed the best action for an arrangement that appeared to be working for all concerned.

Until recently, that is.

A federal class action lawsuit filed against the American Council on Gift Annuities in U.S. District Court in Texas seeks to include some 2,000 charities as defendants. The lawsuit is based upon the allegation that charitable gift annuities are a means by which American charities have violated federal antitrust laws. Furthermore, it challenges the manner in which charities manage funds, alleging that some techniques violate the Investment Company Act of 1940.

This is very serious business and

it is clear that Texas charities are not the only ones that should be concerned. The plaintiff in the case has asked that "any charity which has been a sponsor of the American Council on Gift Annuities or its predecessor, the Committee on Gift Annuities, on or after December 30, 1990 and which has outstanding charitable gift annuities or other life income products pursuant to the Council's suggested rates will be a part of this class [of defendants] even if it has no contacts with Texas."

An organization called the Charitable Accord has formed to fight what it deems to be an unwarranted attack on the national charitable community. The Charitable Accord is providing leadership - from fundraising to coordinating efforts for legislative relief - for what must become an effort of national scope.

North Carolina charities wishing to support the work of the Accord should contact Terry L. Simmons at 1601 Elm St., Suite 1700, Dallas, TX, 75201-7241, phone (214) 922-0215 or fax (214) 978-3395.

United Way taps Michigan executive

The new head of a newly formed United Way that consolidates affiliates in Durham, Orange and Wake counties has experience with United Way consolidations.

By TODD COHEN

Research Triangle Park

Tom Dugard, executive director of the Greater Kalamazoo United Way in Michigan for the past five years, knew that the consolidation of United Way affiliates in Durham, Orange and Wake counties last summer likely would create a job opening. And he wanted the job.

About the same time, Dugard bought a purebred dog, adopting the name that the kennel had given it - Tradewinds Sir Raleigh.

Adopting the name was a way of preparing himself for a move to a new location - matching circumstances with opportunity.

This month, Dugard brings the same pragmatic style to his new job as president of the newly formed Triangle United Way.

"My direction as an individual is to understand given circumstances and needs at a given time and to take those given needs and match them to the resources that are available," he says.

Dugard will use that approach as he takes on the job of merging the staffs of three United Way affiliates, while helping their separate boards maintain local control over raising and distributing millions of dollars. He also faces the challenge of guiding the consolidated organization through a period in which a growing number of United Way affiliates are redefining their roles in the communities they serve.

Dugard, a native of Memphis, Tenn., and a 19-year United Way veteran, has instituted a host of new programs in Kalamazoo. They include a new nonprofit that works with families; a Youth United Way program in which high school students raise money and decide how to spend it to help solve community problems; initiatives to reduce the number of infants with low birth-weights and to increase immunization among young children; and a midnight basketball league that has reduced crime in inner-city neighborhoods.

Dugard anticipates he will have numerous issues to deal with in overseeing the start-up of the Triangle's regional United Way. In fact, in 1991 through 1993, the Kalamazoo United Way incorporated four smaller affiliates, including one it had helped cre-

ate.

The Kalamazoo United Way has 56 member agencies, a staff of 20 people and raised \$6.9 million this year. Like a growing number of United Way affiliates, it is moving to a funding system that treats member agencies as customers and ties funding to the outcome that an agency projects it will have on the people it serves.



Tom Dugard

By comparison, the Triangle United Way will have 99 member agencies and a staff of 35 people. In their annual campaigns this fall, the three affiliates raised \$16 million. The regional organization also is moving toward more flexible funding strategies.

Dugard says the Triangle's regional United Way consolidation is an opportunity "to allow people to live in a local community and solve problems in that context, but also to solve problems in a larger context, without the concerns or limitations that geographic boundaries cause."

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function as repositories of black cultural, intellectual and educational resources - improving ties between these schools and the private sector should rank high on the list of this state's priorities.

In recent years, many corporations have shifted their grants from unrestricted support of historically black schools to grants for specific or targeted academic research projects that have clear links to their businesses. Targeted grantmaking is a trend among foundations as well. So historically black schools must get out in front of the curve and help funders develop a grantmaking philosophy relevant to the needs of their institutions, as well as design projects and programs that are directed toward corporate funders' industry concerns.

For example, corporations and foundations could target funds to historically black schools to develop early childhood research initiatives. Such basic research is now fostered

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