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Nonprofit Knowledge Exchange to Promote Peer Learning in the Nonprofit Sector

In an effort to promote peer learning among nonprofit practitioners, Valerie F. Leonard has expanded her website to include the Nonprofit Knowledge Exchange. This interactive forum provides a safe space for nonprofit leaders to ask questions and seek advice from other nonprofit practitioners; share articles that others may find of interest; or, voice concerns and make recommendations regarding some of the challenges and policies that currently impact the nonprofit sector. The moderator will post questions to get discussions started, and forum members will have the opportunity to introduce topics of particular concern to them.

While providing an overview of the bulletin board's features, Ms. Leonard reminded her audience to "...remember, the forum is only as good as the information that our members provide. In order for this system to work, we have to use it like Chicago voters vote--early and often...I say that only half jokingly". Ms. Leonard was making a point that the more often visitors sign in and make meaningful contributions to online discussions, the more likely they are to learn from their peers, and raise the collective knowledge of all members who actively participate in the online community.

Visitors can sign up to register by visiting www.valeriefleonard.com, and clicking onto the "Knowledge Exchange" button in the left margin. They will be guided to a page on the website that provides further information, and then forwarded to the bulletin board for registration. The registration process should take 5-10 minutes in all. The forums are listed below, and will change from time to time to keep the discussions fresh.

Forum 1: Capacity Building Blocks

This forum was designed for participants of Capacity Building Blocks, a 10-week workshop series for nonprofit leaders who are serious about maximizing community impact. Workshop participants may respond to follow up discussion questions, encourage one another to complete capacity building projects, share information and other capacity building resources. To learn more about the Capacity Building Blocks series, visit www.valeriefleonard.com to download a brochure.

Forum 2:

Stimulus Funding

This forum is provided so that you may share your insights regarding the impact of Stimulus Funding on local nonprofits. You might want to share your experiences applying for funds; administering the grants; share pointers as to how to navigate the funding and administration processes, etc. This forum could be particularly useful in exploring ways Stimulus Funding may be more accessible to local organizations that are more likely to be on the front lines of social service delivery.

Forum 3:

Staying Afloat in Troubled Waters

The current economic situation, coupled with the political climate at the State and Federal levels have wreaked havoc on nonprofit organizations' budgets. A number of organizations have considered merging; trimmed staff, cut back on hours, discontinued vital services, or even closed their doors. What is your organization doing to weather the storm? Would you care to share your stories of survival?

Valerie F. Leonard is a Chicago-based community development consultant, with a mission to strengthen the capacity of organizations to make a positive impact on the communities they serve through technical assistance, specialized workshops, resource and organizational development and project management. Ms. Leonard is currently accepting suggestions for future discussion forum topics. If you have any ideas, you may reach her at 773-521-3137, or e-mail her at consulting@valeriefleonard.com.