

Without Delaware's nonprofits, who would step up?

Written by Chris Grundner June 2, 2013

delawareonline.com

No food pantries for the families hit hard by the economy. Nobody to help you find shelter after a hurricane destroys your house. No one to talk to or to guide you when a loved one is diagnosed with cancer.

There certainly are many more examples, but, in part, this would be a world without nonprofits.

It is unpleasant to think about, but it serves as a grim reminder how much we need our nonprofit organizations in Delaware and how different our world would look without them.

For clarity, a "nonprofit" is a corporation or association conducting business —without shareholders and without a profit motive —to provide a public benefit.

As such, we all need to realize that nonprofits aren't just around when the unthinkable happens, but that we benefit from their various services every day.

Generally speaking, when the word "nonprofit" is mentioned, the first groups that come to mind are health-related foundations, disaster relief organizations and food banks. If you haven't had to rely on these services, though, you may think nonprofits are nice, but they have nothing to do with you. This could not be further from the truth.

The animal you adopted last year –probably adopted from a nonprofit animal shelter.

The baby you gave birth to –probably delivered at a nonprofit hospital.

The senior center your parents enjoy going to –probably a nonprofit organization.

The museum you enjoyed last weekend –probably a nonprofit organization.

Bottom line: If you live in Delaware, you benefit from the services of a nonprofit every day, whether you realize it or not.

Nonprofits also benefit the Delaware community outside of the services they provide. A recent study indicated that in 2010, nonprofits generated \$5.3 billion in revenues and provided more than 60,000 jobs in Delaware. This adds up to 14 percent of all jobs in the state. The reported payroll for those Delaware jobs that year was more than \$2.6 billion.* In this sense, nonprofits are no different than for-profits. Nonprofit employers pay wage taxes, Social Security and Medicare, and their employees pay personal income tax.

Additionally, by working to improve quality of life, nonprofit organizations play a significant role in economic development for the state. In fact, it has been shown that a significant part of the reason so many new businesses come to Delaware is because it is a great place to live. This is directly tied to our diverse cultural assets for certain, but also in large part to the work of nonprofit organizations.

Without question, nonprofits have been under increased pressure since the economic downturn, with an increase in demand for services and a decline in donations. Surprisingly, however, the number of nonprofits in Delaware has remained relatively consistent over the past six years, and for the most part, the vital

services they provide also have demonstrated great resilience during this time. Given that we all benefit from their services, this is something we should celebrate.

We need to think more of nonprofit organizations and the positive impact they have on our lives. These organizations, the employees within them and the volunteers who serve them are critical to the Delaware economy and our communities. The nonprofit sector is just as important as our private and government sectors and deserves an equal seat at the table when it comes to finding solutions to the challenges facing the First State.

Bottom line: Nonprofits deliver just like businesses and government deliver. They are more than a nice-to-have; they are a must-have.

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*Updated in June 2013