



Photo by Gateway



Photo by The Children's Village

Left: From left is Mary Beth Wetzel, Barvette Patterson, and Libba Vaughan, all longtime members of Gateway's junior board.

Center: Front row, from left, are The Children's Village Leadership Council members Rosario Gumpeng, Natalia Izzo, and Jackie Rosenberg. Back row, from left, is The Children's Village Public Relations Specialist Topher Nichols, former New York Jets Fullback Tony Richardson, and friend of The Children's Village Leadership Council Michael Claxton.

Below: At right is The Children's Village Leadership Council Chair Noah Simon with Tonyna McGhee, director of The Children's Village's Community Center at the Polo Grounds.

Cultivating the Next Generation of Volunteers and Philanthropists

Junior boards create opportunities for both organizations and emerging community leaders



Photo by The Children's Village

As members of Generation X (born 1965–1979) and Generation Y (born 1980–2000) come of age and assume leadership roles, nonprofit organizations are beginning to explore ways to include them in governance. Though inroads are being made, progress is slow; according to BoardSource's 2010 Nonprofit Governance Index, only 2 percent of U.S. nonprofits have board directors under the age of 30, and just 12 percent have directors who are 30-49.

As nonprofit organizations consider how to engage emerging leaders, several Alliance for Children and Families members have turned to junior boards to cultivate the next generation of volunteers and philanthropists. These groups are separate and distinct from the governing board, and are designed specifically with emerging leaders in mind.

Promoting Opportunities for Direct Impact

Alliance member Gateway, Birmingham, Ala., founded its junior board in 1993. According to Kathleen Ross, director of development and communications at Gateway, the group's initial purpose was to serve as a feeder to the board of directors. Over time, it has evolved into something more—a committed group of volunteers dedicated to having a direct impact on children's lives.

Gateway's junior board initially set an upper age limit of 40, but eliminated it as the board's founding

members aged and expressed interest in remaining engaged. Current members range in age from 27-47.

The board, which has 20-30 members at any given time, made a conscious decision early on to focus its efforts on volunteering and direct service. Junior board members organize and participate in two events each month that allow them to interact with children and teens in the residential treatment program. Popular activities include laser tag, ice cream socials, going to movies, attending sporting events, and visiting theme parks.

The junior board holds a charity golf tournament each year to raise money for its activities, and it uses any remaining funds to provide mini-grants to Gateway's programs. It does not do additional fundraising, preferring instead to focus on offering the time and talents of its members to the residents.

Building Leadership Experience

In contrast, fundraising is one of the key roles of the junior board at Alliance member The Children's Village, Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.

The organization's junior board, called the Leadership Council, was founded in 2010 to help the organization fundraise, give young people opportunities for leadership and volunteerism, and help The Children's Village develop new relationships within the for-profit sector.

Continued on page ND-4

"We saw it as an opportunity for young professionals to gain leadership experience and participate in volunteer activities with us," says Tophér Nichols, public relations specialist at The Children's Village.

The council currently has 20 members who range between ages 24-39. While there is a direct-service component to its efforts, the group focuses on networking and small-scale fundraising. It raised \$30,000 in its first year.

Facilitating New Community Connections

At Alliance member FamilyMeans, Stillwater, Minn., the Next Generation Leadership Council engages in a combination of volunteer service and fundraising. The group has approximately 15 members between the ages of 20-40.

According to FamilyMeans President and CEO Arba-Della Beck, the council was established in 2004 in response to conversations with donors. "We kept hearing the message over and over again that we needed to turn to our younger leaders," Beck says.

The changing demographics of the Stillwater community also influenced the decision to create a board for emerging leaders. As young families started moving into the community, FamilyMeans began to consider how the organization could engage them.

"We started asking, 'Who are they? How do we get to know them? What's important to them?'" Beck says. The Next Generation Leadership Council became a vehicle for answering those questions.

Interacting with the Governing Board

The junior boards at all three organizations are separate and distinct from the organizations'

governing boards, but leaders at each agency say it is critical for there to be a mutually supportive relationship between the two bodies. It also is important to create opportunities for frequent interaction.

At The Children's Village, this includes having trustees informally mentor Leadership Council members, helping them address professional development and networking interests. Trustees also attend the Leadership Council's fundraisers and other events.

"The relationship is informal, but it's strong," Nichols says. "There's a lot of interaction."

Although none of the organizations consider their junior boards to be primarily "feeding mechanisms" for the governing board, the groups do serve as a conduit to greater leadership roles at the organizations. At both Gateway and FamilyMeans, several junior board members have moved directly from the junior board to the board of directors.

"Because a relationship exists before the move from junior board to governing board, the transition always seems to go very smoothly," Ross of Gateway says. ▮

BoardSource's 2010 Nonprofit Governance Index is available at boardsource.org. Learn more about the three members highlighted in this article at their websites: gway.org, childrensvillage.org, and familymeans.org.



Top: From left are The Children's Village Leadership Council members Kyle Lazarus and Ali Mirian.

Bottom: Several members of the FamilyMeans Next Generation Leadership Council gather for a photo. The group is comprised of about 15 emerging leaders who are mostly in their 20s and 30s.

Charting their Own Course

Allowing junior boards to self-define their involvement leads to many benefits

The benefits of establishing a junior board are numerous. They provide new ideas and energy, increased diversity, a broadened donor base, technology acumen, and knowledge about how to relate to and engage other young people in the community.

In seeking junior board members, organizations should look for individuals who are passionate about the mission, willing

and able to volunteer time, and interested in self-determining the group's course of action.

Additional content pertaining to the benefits of junior boards and qualities to seek in its members are available in the online edition of this article at alliance1.org/nd.