



Sustainable Springfield's Laura Street Garden, Benivia Forester's Young Survivors Group and SALSAL Chapter Group on Walk to Raise Awareness for Diabetic Foot Ulcers at Audubon Park, New Orleans.

creating a noteworthy NONPROFIT

The Ins and Outs of Building a Successful Nonprofit

By Cheryl Lock

If you had the opportunity to really make a difference in a community—would you do it? Would you do it if you knew it would mean long hours, intense work and little to no pay?

Building a successful nonprofit business takes guts, determination and a whole lot of scrappiness. “In the end, building a successful nonprofit is a lot of work, but it’s also very rewarding,” said Amanda Searle, who co-created the organization Sustainable Springfield, a local nonprofit that focuses on turning local liabilities into assets. “In the end, you just have to go for it! There’s a lot of information online, and it’s not very difficult. Always remember your mission and why you are doing it.”

FINDING THE MONEY TO KEEP GOING

Dr. Desmond Bell and his wife, De Anna created the nonprofit, Save a Leg, Save a Life, which raises awareness for the growing need of the medical community to become aware of advances in wound care treatment. “The actual act of creating the nonprofit was the easy part for us,

To find out more about the individual nonprofits mentioned in the article visit their websites:

Save a Leg, Save a Life:
<http://savealegsavealife.org/>

Sustainable Springfield:
<http://www.sustainable.springfield.net/>

A Different Type of Courage:
<http://www.adtoc.org/>

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— *Benivia Forester, CEO and founder of A Different Type of Courage*

it was finding funding that has been the biggest challenge” said Dr. Bell. “We’ve learned over time that you have to get most of your funding through the public if you’re a nonprofit. Then the issue you run into is people say they love what you’re doing, but there’s a certain aspect of not wanting to get too involved, or to give too much, unless there’s some way the organization can benefit them, as well.”

That’s where developing a good fundraising strategy comes in.

CREATING A TEAM

Most people who have started their own organizations agree that aligning yourself with the people who are just as passionate about the issue as you are is another important aspect.

“We really didn’t know too much about starting a nonprofit before we jumped in,” said Lauren Madrid, Breast Care Coordinator and co-Founder of ADTOC, Inc., A Different Type of Courage, which is a young survivors group focused on helping young women between the ages of 18 – 45 diagnosed with breast cancer. “I work on the business side of nonprofits, and Benivia [Forester] is a survivor, but those experiences still didn’t even begin to touch on what we needed to put the organization together. Luckily, we were fortunate enough that another young survivor we were working with knew of an attorney who got us set up and gave us a great deal of knowledge on how to get the organization off the ground. My neighbor is an accountant who manages charitable foundations; she talked to us about our taxes and the IRS.”

The Bells agree that the people they’ve met along the way have been a huge reason they are finding so much success in their organization. “One company saw the simple, grass roots model of lunch-and-learns and dinner lectures that we had started in Jacksonville, and said they could see this model working well in other communities, too,” said Dr. Bell. “They encouraged us to move out of Jacksonville in the first place. Our initial idea when that happened in 2008 was to create five other chapters in other cities. Four years after that we are up to 60 chapters around the country.”

LEARNING THE LEGAL SIDE OF IT

Coming up with the idea to start a nonprofit is usually the easy part for founders—they feel inspired to help or tackle some cause, they become passionate about it and decide to take the steps to move forward.

The passion is easy. It’s what comes next that can trip some nonprofit founders up.

“For me, personally, the roadblock was moving past the passion and the emotional aspect of it and acquiring the knowledge to do the documentation and the footwork it takes to start up the nonprofit,” said Forester, CEO and founder of A Different Type of Courage. “That was the initial roadblock, because you don’t know what you don’t know, and you really have to research and be thorough with those who have worked with nonprofits.”

THE MAKINGS OF A SUCCESSFUL FUNDRAISER

Grant money aside, most nonprofits are at the mercy of the public to raise money for funding for their businesses—and if you’ve ever had to ask for money from strangers before you’ll know, it’s no easy task. We asked our nonprofit pros to let us in on some of the secrets that have helped them raise the big bucks for their own businesses:

1. Tap into the community. Use the resources at your disposal. “Get the word out into the community, talk about what you’re doing and planning, and share the struggle and where you are,” said Benivia Forester, CEO and Founder of A Different Type of Courage. “People will end up giving you their own ideas and offering to include you in their events as well.”

2. Think outside the box. Consider organizing a fundraiser around something complimentary to your mission, suggests Amanda Searle, President of Sustainable Springfield. “Our biggest fundraiser we do every year is Cooking In Season, where we partner with local chefs to teach cooking classes focusing on seasonal ingredients that someone may be growing, or they may be purchasing from their local farmer’s market.”

3. Plan for things to go wrong. Any and everything can and will go wrong when you’re putting together a big fundraiser, said Tia R. Ford, Advancement Manager—Events for Second Harvest North Florida. “Be prepared for bad things to happen with a Plan B, C and more, if necessary.”

4. It’s all about timing. Keep a timeline of tasks and strategically spread them out, said Ford. That way, everything doesn’t hit you and have to happen all at once.

5. Keep good notes. Get yourself a journal or notebook dedicated to your fundraiser where you can take notes on everything that comes up regarding that event for later reference, or for the following year’s event, says Ford. “Keep notes such as contact information, resource information, ideas or suggestions, important quantities and even dimensions.”



Dr. Bell hosting his weekly radio show, the SALSAL radio show on WOKV 690 AM and 106.5 FM at noon on Sundays; Amanda Searle at Sustainable Springfield's community orchard.

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— Dr. Desmond Bell, co-founder of *Save a Leg, Save a Life*

Madrid added that getting a good attorney is part of the magic formula for creating a successful nonprofit, as well. “Unless you are one yourself, you really don’t want to do anything illegal, and you want to make sure your language is on-point and all of that,” she said. “You also don’t want to waste money, and a good attorney helps a great deal to provide guidance on those types of issues.”

The Bells admit that they were a bit naïve when they first started the nonprofit procedure. “We had no clue how nonprofits worked. So that took a lot of time, immersing ourselves in the legal aspects, the accounting aspects, and surrounding ourselves with some good people for advice along the way,” said Dr. Bell.

PUTTING IN THE TIME

Most nonprofits can start out innocently enough, until suddenly, building the success of the company has become a full-time job.

At least that’s what happened with Dr. Bell.

“We started off dabbling here and there, and then, as more time went by, it’s gotten to the point where it takes up a good 75 percent of my time now, and I’m traveling around the country, speaking at different lectures, hosting a radio show and writing articles on it,” he said.

In fact, Dr. Bell is so busy building the company; he’s significantly cut back on his time seeing patients. And his wife De Anna, focusing on the foundation; stopped work as a nurse practitioner to go back to school to become a certified meeting planner and further develop the chapter communities. “We went from running this little Mom and Pop wound center which impacted local change, to shifting focus a few years later, to immerse ourselves full-time in operating the foundation, which has impacted the medical and wound care community

nationally. We feel the SALSAL foundation can make the most impact by focusing on awareness (for PAD diabetes), prevention of amputation through education of health care providers, community outreach”, said Mrs. Bell. Dr. Bell adds, “It’s crazy. I really miss practicing on a regular basis, because I thoroughly enjoyed it, but I always say I’m taking one for the team right now. If you are as passionate as we are—and for us it’s impacting the way diabetic foot ulcers are treated in this county and around the world—you have to get it growing, get the public engaged in it. That’s the end game goal right now, and that’s all that matters.”

Forester agrees that developing a nonprofit takes a lot of time and effort. “It’s more than just a passion and a warm fuzzy feeling,” she said. “Initially people think it’s all about an emotional tie to some form of service for the community, but from a business standpoint, it requires a lot more in-depth training to do this. You are required to do articles of incorporation, to write bylines to support those articles, to develop a budget and learn the taxes. You have to be exposed to the community, and you have to be willing to be exposed and educated in the areas of business operations that you may not previously have been exposed to.”

At the end of the day, though, no time or money troubles can stop these passionate people from continuing to further their goal. “We had no idea how successful it was going to be, and no idea that we were going to grow so much,” said Searle.

Madrid added, “For our part, we have seen an increasing need in the city for young women being diagnosed with breast cancer. We’re determined to provide the help that those women need, no matter what it takes.” **FD**

Visit <http://north.floridoctormag.com/> for **10 DO’S AND DON’TS** to consider when starting a nonprofit.