

Our Voice: This group could help your Tri-Cities nonprofit

By the Tri-City Herald Editorial Board April 08, 2018 1:20 PM

Running a nonprofit organization is no easy task.

Many have great intentions but few resources and minimal budgets to fulfill their missions. No ready-made resource exists locally to help guide these organizations through the maze of requirements that come with federal nonprofit status. Things like directors and officers insurance can read like a foreign language to those new to the nonprofit world.

A group of local nonprofit leaders wants to change that.

The Columbia Basin Nonprofit Association will hold its inaugural meeting Tuesday. The group's aim is to promote philanthropy, share best practices, offer operational cost saving opportunities and highlight its members' distinct efforts to provide solutions to our community's needs.

Those are some pretty lofty goals, but the founders of the organization have the credentials to back it up:

- Mark Brault of Grace Clinic
- Grant Baynes, the former chief of the Richland Fire Department and now executive director of Senior Life Resources Northwest
- Carrie Green of the Three Rivers Community Foundation
- Brian Ace, executive director of the Boys & Girls Club of Benton & Franklin Counties
- George Woodward of the United Way of Benton & Franklin Counties
- Steve Howland of YMCA Tri-Cities

- Tami LaDoux of Tri-Cities Residential Services
- and Cathryn Tames of the Children's Developmental Center.

The group represents some of the bigger players in the nonprofit community in the Tri-Cities. Most have many years of experience navigating the waters specific to nonprofit management. And they want to educate other executive directors using that experience, and finding ways to create shared resources so each group doesn't have to reinvent the wheel.

From human resources to building maintenance, the group believes economies of scale would work in their favor, creating cost savings by having a bigger buying group instead of each individual organization seeking out their own items.

In some cases, individual nonprofit organizations are too small to qualify for programs that many businesses can offer. Or the management of those programs — like 401k plans — is too much for already stretched staffs to administer.

Most businesses can find a trade organization or association that aligns with their business, from the Washington Hospitality Association to the Association of Washington Businesses. Those organizations offer benefits to members at discounts. They are able to do that because a pool of members has more power than a sole proprietor when shopping for the a service.

Dues for the Columbia Basin Nonprofit Association are minimal: \$50 for organizations with a budget of \$250,000 or \$100 per year for those with budgets over that. Founding members are ponying up \$1,000 each to get things rolling.

Organizations interested in membership or attending Tuesday's meeting can contact the Three Rivers Community Foundation at 735-5559.