Effective Supervision Strategies

Don Goughler, MSW
Forbes Funds
Executive in Residence, Capacity Building
goughler@forbesfunds.org; dhg4@pitt.edu
412-965-3015

ASSIGNMENT
Mr. Goughler would like you to submit one question that is of interest to you as it relates to organizational leadership, by January 31st. He will address the questions through a practical discussion. Please send your questions directly to him at dhg4@pitt.edu and cc maz49@pitt.edu. Thank you.

Don Goughler serves as the Forbes Funds executive-in-residence to provide advisory support to nonprofit leaders and boards. Goughler recently retired as the President/CEO of Family Services of Western Pa after fifteen years in that position. Prior to that, he was employed for twenty-two years by Southwestern Pennsylvania Human Services and was the Executive Vice President/CEO for that organization from 1988-99. Goughler received a BA degree from Westminster College and an MSW from the University of Pittsburgh, where he has been an adjunct faculty member for twenty years, teaching graduate courses in social work management. Goughler has served on several nonprofit boards and advisory groups and most recently chaired the national gerontology project, New Age of Aging, from 2006-13 for the Alliance for Children and Families. He also served on the national board of trustees for Ways to Work, Inc from 2006-13. Goughler has published articles on social services management in several juried journals and also served on the editorial board of the national social work journal, Families in Society. Among his honors and recognitions he has received an Alumni Achievement Award from Westminster College in 1988, the Gertrude Labowitz Lifetime Achievement Award and lifetime achievement award from CLASS in 2012, and Mental Health America, Westmoreland chapter, in 2014. Mr. Goughler has made a lifetime commitment to helping others by serving on several nonprofit boards and advisory councils, teaching social work courses, and by publishing his work for others to benefit and learn.
References for leadership in nonprofits.


- Pecora, PJ; Cherin, David; Bruce, Emily; de Jesus Arguello, Trinidad (2010). *Strategic supervision*. New York: SAGE.


Adviser from Forbes Funds assists Pittsburgh region nonprofits
Forbes Funds first executive-in-residence guides nonprofits looking for direction

September 25, 2014

The Great Recession sent more people to food pantries and forced many who had never before known economic hardship to seek assistance in the form of second-hand winter coats or help paying their utility bills.

To meet the surge in demand for such services after the economy soured in 2007, South Hills Interfaith Ministries expanded its program offerings and quadrupled its revenue base — from $320,000 to $1.3 million for the current fiscal year.

Now the Bethel Park nonprofit — which runs two food pantries and provides programs including financial education workshops, clothing drives and activities for refugee families — is evaluating whether to expand its physical space and exploring whether to launch a major capital campaign.

“A wrong decision could really set the organization back,” said Jim Guffey, executive director. “We want to make sure whatever decisions we make will be sustainable.”

So before the board of directors gathers next month for a retreat during which members will discuss strategic planning, Mr. Guffey has been bouncing ideas off Donald Goughler, a third-party expert with no ties to South Hills Interfaith Ministries or its board but who has a long history of management in the nonprofit sector.

Mr. Goughler in July became the first executive-in-residence at The Forbes Funds, an affiliate of the Pittsburgh Foundation that provides grants and programs to help nonprofits improve the bottom line and overall performance. South Hills Interfaith Ministries is one of 12 nonprofits in the region he is currently advising.

“He’s a phenomenal sounding board,” Mr. Guffey said. “He can give me an objective point of view … he’s been there and done that.”

Mr. Goughler, 69, retired in July from Family Services of Western Pennsylvania, where he spent 15 years as president and chief executive. Prior to that job, he was chief executive of Southwestern Pennsylvania Human Services for 11 years. He has managed about 500 employees at those nonprofits. He’s also an adjunct professor at the University of Pittsburgh’s School of Social Work, where he teaches graduate courses in supervision and finance.

The Jefferson Regional Hospital Foundation helps fund his position, and The Forbes Funds hopes to add another executive-in-residence by the end of the year, the organization said in a statement announcing Mr. Goughler’s position.
He works three days a week and meets face to face with nonprofit executive directors facing specific strategic challenges in running their organizations. “I’ve probably made more mistakes than they ever will,” said Mr. Goughler, who views his role as “helping the CEO build confidence.”

“I see myself as a guest, rather than an expert … a guest with useful experience.”

He prefers to visit nonprofits at their own sites rather than meet in his office. “I walk around, see the program and ask them about their vision.”

Among the issues many are grappling with, Mr. Goughler said, is the result of federal and state budget cuts that left organizations scrambling for ways to deliver their services.

“The cuts have really caused nonprofit social service executives to say, ‘How can I remodel my organization?’ or ‘How can I manage costs?’ or ‘How can I find new revenues?’”

Mr. Goughler said he doesn’t consult on fundraising but he can help nonprofits develop groundwork for a fundraising campaign.

One skill many nonprofit managers are seeking to perfect, he said, is the ability to work in partnership with their boards of directors. His advice: Provide board members with lots of detailed information to review before it’s time to vote on proposals.

“Usually the trustees want you to put your expertise out there,” he said. “If you make trustees partners and work with them at a strategic level, the payoff is great.

“The executive’s job is to show the board how things will change, not just how they have changed. When you get to the point that the government cuts your funds, the board already needs to know what Strategy B will be. You can’t make it up.”

Mr. Goughler earned a bachelor’s degree in theater at Westminster College and served as an officer in the Army in Korea before going to work at the now-closed Woodville State Hospital in 1971. His job as a supervisor at the facility ignited his interest in social services, so he obtained a master’s in social work from Pitt in 1976.

That year, he joined Southwestern Pennsylvania Human Services as a planning director and, through a series of merger, he became chief executive of the organization in 1988. In 1999, he was tapped as president and chief executive of Family Services.

He started the part-time job for The Forbes Funds just days after retiring from his full-time career.

At Angels’ Place, a nonprofit that assists low-income, single parents who are students, Mr. Goughler is coaching Beth Banas. She was named executive director in February after working for the organization for 25 years.

“I had always been in leadership but in a very different capacity,” she said.

Angels’ Place operates three sites in Swissvale, Brookline and the North Side, and it employs 25 full-time and part-time workers. Mr. Goughler has helped Ms. Banas with a range of strategic issues, including
creating a job description for the new position of assistant executive director, as well as with marketing and creating a development plan for long-term financial stability.

After each meeting with Mr. Goughler, she said, “I walk away with things I’m going to implement on a regular basis.”

Joyce Gannon: jgannon@post-gazette.com or 412-263-1580.