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PHILANTHROPY

Paying It Forward & Back

MANY OF US BENEFIT FROM NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS MORE THAN WE MIGHT REALIZE



BY JEFFREY R. PICKERING

A recent study by the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy found that only 5 percent of Americans believed they received services from a nonprofit within the previous year. This statistic made me stop and think about how my neighbors or I might respond to this question. My answer is a resounding “yes.” Give the fol-

lowing examples some thought, and I’ll bet yours is too.

Have I received health services from a local nonprofit organization? Yes, from Treasure Coast Community Health.

Last year, I improved my overall health by finding a new physician at the nonprofit Treasure Coast Community Health. Like many, I had to find a new doctor when my

own physician opened a concierge practice and stopped accepting my employer-sponsored health insurance. While I do not blame her for making this business decision, finding a new doctor was not a simple task, even for a relatively healthy patient like me.

After several unsuccessful attempts to establish care with primary care doctors available

INDIAN RIVER INSIGHTS



Benefits from nonprofits can be found in many forms.

through Cleveland Clinic Indian River Hospital, a friend suggested I contact TCCH. He told me that his daughter was seeing a TCCH physician and her experience had been positive. Until then, I had not considered TCCH as an option because I assumed the organization only cared for patients who were uninsured or from low-income households. (In 2019, the Indian River Community Foundation awarded a grant of \$50,000 to help establish a new TCCH medical clinic at United Against Poverty's new UP Center, hence my assumption.)

I followed through with my friend's recommendation and established care at TCCH with a new primary care provider,

a veteran medical doctor who has been easy to access and who is paid by my health insurance. I remain pleased with the care I am receiving from this nonprofit organization and am grateful it is here serving our community.

Have I received educational services from a local nonprofit organization? Yes, if by "local" I count online classes at Cornell University taken from Vero Beach.

In 2022, the Community Foundation received notice from the firm that had been providing outsourced accounting, finance, and investment management services to our organization since 2008 that it was discontinuing

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this practice. As a result, in addition to my regular duties as the Community Foundation's CEO, by 2024 I needed to oversee a process to identify, review, hire, secure board approval, and implement relationships with one or more firms providing similar services. Or bring one or more of these essential operations in-house. Ugh.

When it comes to many responsibilities that fall into my lap whether I am prepared to assume them or not, I am a big proponent of the philosophy "Fake it until you make it." With a balance sheet quickly approaching \$100 million, annual revenues of \$20 million, and annual grants averaging \$10 million, however, this was clearly not the approach I would be taking with this Community Foundation project. To succeed, I would need to rely heavily on the expertise of our treasurer and the other members of our finance committee, along with the experience, diligence, and attention to detail of our

vice president of operations. I would also need to brush up on my knowledge of accounting beyond the managerial level I had been practicing throughout my career.

Between January and June of 2023, I attended six online courses to earn a professional certificate in accounting from the nonprofit Cornell University. I was able to attend each class, complete the required coursework, and take exams from my Vero Beach office. In most cases, I did all of this in the early morning, in late evening, or on the occasional weekend. As a result, I improved my ability to analyze our organization's balance sheet and income statement, to monitor financial transactions and cash flow, to examine financial trends, and to interpret financial data to inform strategy. Because of this help from another nonprofit, I am more confident and fluent in the new and improved accounting, finance, and investment management solutions we have implemented.



The Laura (Riding) Jackson Foundation received a grant from the IRCF to help move the poet's home to IRSC's Mueller Campus in 2019.



6:45 PM. Story time.

United Way.

Through our support of education initiatives, we're fostering a love for reading and learning in children of all ages. Together, let's spark imaginations and build brighter futures through the power of storytelling.

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United Way of
Indian River County

**UNITED WAY
FOUNDATION
OF INDIAN RIVER COUNTY**



Vero Beach enjoys many literary events offered by the Laura (Riding) Jackson Foundation, such as writing workshops and a poetry barbecue.



this program helped her gain admission and a substantial scholarship package to attend a well-respected liberal arts college that we would not have been able to afford otherwise.

As for me, the inspiration to create my own publishing imprint, Riomar Press, came from the example set by LRJF's own Seizen Press Vero. Through this imprint, the organization has published four books of poetry, starting with *Decade: Ten Years of Poetry and Barbecue*. The organization's president, Jacque Jacobs, even took time to teach me how to do it, a process she also used to create her own imprint, Drellag Press, which has since published six books.

While not as prolific as Jacobs, I am proud of my first published book and of the vehicle I have created to publish future literary and professional works. Although it is unlikely I will publish a *New York Times* bestseller or retire on the proceeds from my book sales, every time I record a purchase I am encouraged that someone found my work valuable enough to pay for it. All because of inspiration and assistance I received from a nonprofit.

Have I improved my housing

Have I increased my economic opportunity with help from a nonprofit organization? Yes, with inspiration from the Laura (Riding) Jackson Foundation. This is also true for my daughter, Olivia.

Since 1992, LRJF has served as the "literary heart of Indian River County." In addition to preserving the late author's home, the organization's primary mission is to nurture local writers through a series of literary offerings, including writers' groups, summer camps, workshops, and poetry festivals.

I first became aware of LRJF when the Community Foundation awarded a grant of \$50,000 to help relocate the poet's historic Florida Cracker-style home and pole

barn to Indian River State College's Mueller Campus in 2019. A visit to the historic home and surrounding garden is like taking a trip back in time.

Shortly thereafter, it was the organization's teen writ-

ing program that served as a creative outlet and welcome respite during the midst of the global pandemic for Olivia and several of her friends. The confidence and improved writing skills Olivia developed through



In April, Indian River Habitat for Humanity received a grant from the Community Foundation for \$30,000.

situation with help from a nonprofit organization? Yes, with help from the nonprofit Indian River Habitat for Humanity.

Now before you start thinking that generous donations were made so that Habitat could build a home for the Community Foundation's CEO, I would like to introduce you to the organization's ReStore. This program collects donated household items including furniture, appliances, and even leftover construction materials, which are either sold or used directly to build and furnish homes for individuals and families in need in our community.

My housing situation

improved not because I received services from Habitat, but because they offered free pickup of several gently used pieces of furniture left behind by my college-aged children. Because of their high quality and good shape, I estimate these items were sold in the ReStore to generate at least a couple thousand dollars for the charity. Together with the grants awarded by the Community Foundation and its clients, and the annual cash donation that my wife, Stephanie, and I make, Habitat is able to carry out its mission, and I have a bit more tranquility on the home front.

By now I imagine you might be making the connection that



LaCrystal and Delia are all smiles outside their Habitat home.

some of the help, services, or other improvements to your own quality of life have come because of a local nonprofit charitable organization. With over 800 public charities with

IRS 501(c)(3) status in Indian River County—175 of which earn more than \$50,000 in annual revenue—I might even bet on it. I'm certain my odds are better than 5 percent. 🌱



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