FURTHER MAGAZINE

THE LEADER

THE DIYer

THE CONNECTOR

2014 CALGARY INNOVATION AWARDS

MEET THE WINNERS

CCVO
Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations
What does it take to carry us further? As a community. As an organization. As an individual. What inspires us to move beyond the status quo, the tried and true, and to venture into new territory?

Answers to those questions are never easy, but at the end of the day, change comes from the simple desire to create something better—and the determination to see an idea to its fruition.

The Calgary Nonprofit Innovation Awards were established in 2011 to celebrate this creativity and risk-taking and to shine a light on the new ideas that have been bred and born here in Calgary.

The three winning organizations demonstrate the power of unique collaborations and the benefits of community-driven modes of operating. They show what’s possible when a challenging issue is addressed in a positive way and innovative ideas are driven further.

You may already be an engaged volunteer in your community, or enjoy the rich cultural opportunities Calgary has to offer. You may even have found your career in one of the more than 5,700 nonprofits in Calgary.

You are part of the nonprofit sector. These stories are your stories. We hope that you are inspired to think of what you can do to move your communities further.

Katherine Van Hooy
President and CEO

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THE BOTTOM LINE

MEASURING INTANGIBLE THINGS—DEFINING VALUE IN THE NONPROFIT SECTOR

BRIAN EMMETT

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“IT IS AN IMPORTANT SECTOR OF THE ECONOMY. IT’S IMPORTANT FOR THE CHARITABLE SECTOR TO START TO TALK ABOUT ITSELF THAT WAY”
Emmett says this ability to explain—and explain credibly—is essential. “You need to back up your story. Why is it important? Why should we think more about it? Why should it have a higher place on the agenda of governments and businesses and people?”

While the sector is currently growing faster than the Canadian GDP, most of its revenue sources are growing more slowly. Emmett believes this will lead to innovation, possibly in the form of income-producing activities that take inspiration from the corporate sector. He says this could bring the sectors closer together. “It could allow the nonprofit sector to take advantage of business techniques like financial management and strategy.”

The intangibility of the nonprofit “product” creates challenges, but Emmett says this is the very thing that makes the sector necessary. “The things the nonprofit and charitable sector provides are things the private sector can’t deliver. You can’t sell them in the marketplace.”

Nonprofit sector is a value-driven phenomenon, Emmett says. “It’s driven by what people want.” In this sense, the nonprofit sector is driven by many of the same forces that drive the corporate sector. The challenge is that most of what the nonprofit sector delivers is intangible. “It’s hard to sell social justice. It’s hard to sell environmental quality. You’re in the business of selling services that are hard to measure, yet people want you to measure better,” says Emmett. Stephanie Robertson is the founder of SiMPACT Strategy Group, an organization that helps charities and nonprofits do just that—measure better. To Robertson, the problem she’s solving is not how to assign economic value to the activities of nonprofits (although she does do that), but how to come up with common terminology that allows people to have conversations about complex issues. SiMPACT uses and teaches SROI (social return on investment) methodology to address this problem, but Robertson says the methodology is simply a tool—the vital thing is to broaden the definition of value to encompass more than numbers. It’s common to frame charities and nonprofits as service providers for vulnerable people, when their true function (and the basis of their value) is to strengthen communities and societies.

The way to measure value for nonprofits, according to Robertson, is to implement outcomes-based evaluation, or in simple terms, to define and evaluate change. “The word ‘impact’ is a bit of a nebulous term, but if you talk about change, people know there is supposed to be a before and after;” says Robertson. “We’re getting better at asking questions that lead us to the information we’re looking for.” The SROI process is helping to shift this conversation. Robertson says some organizations find it a useful way of defining goals internally, improving communication, building confidence and giving clear direction to project teams. It’s also vital in external communications. “Usually clients have a lot of intuitive knowledge of what they’re doing and why, but there’s no way of explaining it to the outside world,” says Robertson.

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STEPHANIE ROBERTSON
In 2004, Stephanie Jackman left her corporate marketing job and created REAP, an organization with no clear precedent. If it didn’t work, she reasoned, she could always go and find another job. “The joke’s on me because I could never go back and get a traditional job now. I didn’t know that then. But I didn’t ever really think that it would fail.”

More than 10 years later, this unique business association has more than 100 members. In 2012 it launched a collaborative carbon-offset initiative that is quietly transforming the city.

The project began when Calgary food truck The Naaco Truck approached the organization with a plan to donate and plant trees in the city. Stephanie says they wanted to tie the project into food security as well as environmental responsibility. “We said, you’re a food business, so wouldn’t it be great if we planted fruit-bearing trees and put them in areas of the city where people don’t have easy access to fresh food?” Greengate Garden Centres agreed to provide plants, and a community orchard was born.

After a distributed orchard was planted across four sites in Forest Lawn in 2013, more donors came on board for 2014. However, planting plans were delayed when the association was unable to get permission to plant on the site it had chosen. Undaunted, Jackman recognized that the organizational requirements of the program were becoming too great to manage solo. She sought a partner.

“Houston Peschl is a professor of sustainability at the University of Calgary. He said the U. of C. has an Enactus chapter that’s all about social entrepreneurship and building leadership through community projects.” Peschl connected REAP with the Enactus Green Projects team, which committed to a minimum of five years with the Community Orchards program. Jackman says the students will help with the logistics of the program and come up with an approach that is consistent and scalable. Meanwhile, Jackman is planning a double-plant this summer, so that the Community Orchards of 2014 and 2015 can take root.

She’s also fielding inquiries from other centres in Western Canada that want to set up associations with the same values as REAP, and says it’s fulfilling to see how creative people can be when they choose to do business sustainably. “I love the innovation that comes from refusing to trade off something for another thing.”

Jackman sees no reason why the Community Orchards shouldn’t continue to flourish and grow. “I would love to get to the point where we’re planting a thousand trees a year. We’re having much bigger conversations about where this could go. In another five years I’d love to see these orchards all over Calgary, creating community spaces that everyone can enjoy.”

“I DIDN’T EVER REALLY THINK THAT IT WOULD FAIL”
Pam Krause knew sexually transmitted infection rates were rising while teen pregnancy rates were dropping. She knew boys were falling behind academically and socially, that young men’s suicide rates were higher than most, and that issues like sexual assault and domestic violence were pervasive. A lot of people knew these things. But Krause was one of the few who knew what to do about it. “I said to myself, ‘We’re missing half the equation.’”

Enter WiseGuyz, a program that covers the standard sex education topics while giving adolescent boys something invaluable: A safe space to ask questions, and to understand their own sexuality and manhood. Krause says when she floated the idea of a program for boys with Blake Spence (who is now the program coordinator), he told her, “Young men are strangled by their masculinity.”

Krause says at that time most sex education programs were aimed at girls; the specific needs of boys were not being addressed. Boys as young as 14 were feeling pressure to conform to a certain type of masculinity that didn’t permit emotional or effeminate behaviour. Krause says the larger context WiseGuyz provides is crucial. “It’s not about putting on condoms. It’s about having a conversation. It’s about communication, decision-making and consent.”

WiseGuyz also focuses on creating empathy in its participants, which Krause says is central to the program’s long-term vision of helping boys become confident, responsible men. “It’s not about helping the children today, it’s about changing their lives forever in an equality-focused way.”

Program participants show a 27 per cent decrease in homophobic principals describe their schools as “safer” post-WiseGuyz, and the program is in demand at schools in Calgary and across the nation. “The biggest hurdle has actually been to deal with the demand for the program. And to do the program with fidelity wherever we’re doing it.”

A second version of WiseGuyz is being created for high school-aged boys, and “Helping Guys Be Wise” workshops at the Calgary Sexual Health Centre’s Training Centre teach nurses and educators, among others, to make their practices more accessible to boys.

Krause says, “The facilitators have been one of the biggest factors in the success of the program. They’re actually men the boys want to be.”
I t began when avid Do-It-Yourselfer Courtney Hare had a eureka moment in the middle of the night. What if people could access a range of tools without having to buy, rent or store them? Hare pitched the idea to the Awesome Foundation, hoping she could get a grant. She got one. That pitch also attracted a small community of volunteers who went on to create an enormously successful tool library in Calgary’s Bridgeland/Riverside communities.

Hare says the two-year path from “eureka” to launch day wasn’t always smooth. “Maybe we were afraid of failure. We weren’t entrepreneurs. We had no capital, no experience, no existing model in the city.” The project hibernated for months before Hare, who works as Financial Literacy Manager at Momentum, decided she’d better just go for it. “It’s better to try something and fail than not try it all.”

She put a notice in the Bridgeland-Riverside community newsletter inviting people to get involved and set a launch date of June 7, 2014. From that point, Hare says, it was the little library that could. A team came together, a neighbour who works as a tool consultant for Makita got a discount on tools, and the president of the community association took the idea to Bridgeland’s condo communities. The team secured a shed and began to stock it, pooling their own tools and purchasing others.

Less than a year since it opened, the Calgary Tool Library has become a prized community resource and gathering place, attracting patrons from Bridgeland and neighbourhoods all over the city. Entrepreneurs, small business owners and the nearby Bridge- land Community Garden use this resource, as do people tackling home repairs and art projects. Beakerhead became the Library’s first organizational member and the Bench Project, a community-based initiative to construct and install free benches around the city, also relies on the Calgary Tool Library.

The Library is beginning to offer basic equipment-training workshops, and Hare says it provides plenty of informal training as well. “The library is a hub for conversations. People ask questions and chat with other members.”

Hare lives in a 1928 bungalow that needs plenty of maintenance—an activity she’s always loved. “I learned through YouTube and my grandfather and trial and error. I was always borrowing tools.” Here is happy she no longer needs to drive around the city picking up tools in order to complete a project, and even happier that the Calgary Tool Library represents a step forward in the city’s sharing economy. “There are so few of us that need our own tools, and there’s really no advantage to individual ownership.”

Today, the Calgary Tool Library is one of five in Canada (the others are in Toronto, Vancouver, Ottawa and Halifax), and one of a few lending programs in Calgary including Protospace, the Permaculture Guild Mobile Garden Tools and the Albert Park Gardening Tool Rentals. Hare would love to see more. “Every major condo building could have a tool library. Every community. That would be really cool to see.”
THE BASICS

At this level, the organization may or may not be formalized as a nonprofit. There is a variety of organizational styles at this level.

DAY-TO-DAY

Almost all of the daily operational tasks are done by a working board of volunteers and possibly one paid staff member.

GOALS

A nonprofit of this type is typically mandate-driven and committed to a clear, single, ongoing cause to which everyone involved is connected.

Grassroots

FORMAL ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESSES LIKE REPORTING AND FILING SYSTEMS, FUNDRAISING AND HUMAN RESOURCES ARE IN PLACE AT THIS LEVEL.

DAY-TO-DAY

A small staff, accountable to a governance board, runs operations, typically overseen by an executive director.

GOALS

Freed from administrative duties, a governance board can focus on strategic planning and take a proactive approach to its central cause.

Mid-size

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COMMON CHALLENGES

A grassroots board can burn out quickly, especially if the workload is onerous. A lot of very small organizations work toward becoming a mid-sized organization with more resources and a better shot at sustainability. However, not all nonprofits are concerned with growth—many are more focused on long-term stability.

CALGARY EXAMPLES

Art à la Carte, Bridges of Love, Cornerstone Youth Centre, Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan.

COMMON CHALLENGES

Expectations can be high, while the organization’s access to funding and support services is limited. This type of organization needs to be flexible, with excellent lines of communication between the board and the executive director.

CALGARY EXAMPLES

Servants Anonymous, Green Calgary, Momentum, Calgary Seniors Resource Society, Women’s Centre of Calgary, Vibrant Communities Calgary.

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THE BASICS
Think big—a nonprofit of this scale needs plenty of infrastructure to stay afloat. Directed by a governance board, a large organization has a professionally trained staff split into specialized teams like accounting, marketing, human resources, information technology and so on.

GOALS
Large organizations must raise their own profiles and the profiles of their causes, which demands plenty of external communications work. These organizations are often well prepared to engage in collaborative work.

COMMON CHALLENGES
The board is entirely removed from daily operations, and some staff may not be directly engaged with the organization’s core cause. Internal communications efforts are essential to maintain awareness, and to ensure messaging is consistent and decision-making clear.

CALGARY EXAMPLES
Bethany Care Society, Woods Homes, Women In Need, McMan Youth Family and Community Services Association, Calgary Homeless Foundation.

Large Organizations

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Distinct nonprofit education is available in Calgary, including nonprofit management programs that address leadership, board governance, ethics, law, fund development and nonprofit trends.

• Mount Royal University offers a certificate in nonprofit management. mtroyal.ca
• Propellus promotes organizational effectiveness with workshops that cover leadership, governance and fund development. propellus.org

EVERYDAY NONPROFIT
The sheer scope of the nonprofit sector—and the myriad ways it affects our lives—is usually underestimated. In fact, most of us interact with nonprofits often, in ways we aren’t even aware of.

• Get some of those really good croissants at the farmers’ market.
• Play cards with your mom at a senior’s club.
• Check the calendar to see when Atom hockey practices give way to minor soccer practices.
• Look at the updated Mainstage lineup for your favourite outdoor music festival.
• Pounce on a good book at the library.
• Pick up Stampede rodeo tickets and canned food to donate at your community association’s Stampede breakfast.
• Visit a couple of art galleries before you head into the theatre for the performance.
• Finally register for that French conversation class.
• Make sure your trail shoes still fit—you just signed up for a hiking and conservation club.
• Drop off that bag of outgrown kids’ clothing at the thrift store.
• Peek at the updated handicap limits for your favourite outdoor music festival.
• Pounce on a good book at the library.
• Bonjour!
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