

Friday, September 14, 2007

Merger good idea for United Ways

Business Courier of Cincinnati

It's good to see the folks at most United Ways in our region walking the walk, not just talking the talk.

We're talking here about the plan being pursued by four local United Ways to merge. As the Courier reported Sept. 7, **United Way of Greater Cincinnati** is in talks to merge with the Dearborn & Ohio Counties United Fund in southeastern Indiana. At the same time, the Cincinnati-based United Way - which reaches into Northern Kentucky and Clermont County - is also talking with United Way organizations in the Greater Dayton, and Butler and Warren counties about merging. A decision by the boards could come by the end of the year.

A merger would simplify things for companies like **AK Steel**, which has a major plant in the territory served by the United Way of Greater Cincinnati while its new headquarters is served by a different United Way in Butler County.

In trying to add the totals of last year's United Way campaigns, the Courier advocated a merger. Despite this development, short-sightedness still exists among area United Way leaders and boards. The United Ways in Oxford and Clinton County briefly considering joining the merger talks, but dropped out. Shame on them.

The idea of nonprofit consolidation is a good one. While the hype about there being more than 10,000 nonprofits in our region is a bit misleading, there's still strong reason for nonprofits with similar missions to merge. The 10,000 number includes nonprofits of all types, including "mom-and-pops" - that is, nonprofits with no employees and less than \$10,000 in revenue. There are only about 600 thriving nonprofit organizations in our region.

But it's still too many. Just ask David La Piana, a California consultant who will speak at the **Leadership Council of Human Services Executives** seminar in Cincinnati on Nov. 13. (Go to cincinnati.bizjournals.com/cincinnati/stories/2007/09/10/story13.html to read an interview with him.)

Another recent article in the Courier helps prove that collaboration with existing nonprofits is a better way of doing business than starting a new one. A Greater Cincinnati affiliate of **Social Venture Partners International** is being launched to provide nonprofits with grants and support in areas such as marketing, finance, technology, strategic planning and human resources management. Becoming a

member requires an investment of at least \$6,000 a year for three years and a commitment of time and expertise.

Organized by **InterAct for Change**, it's a great way for entrepreneurs to get deeply involved with a nonprofit without needing to start a new one.

Finally, the Courier's own program aimed at encouraging nonprofits to take a deeper look at their operations - or possibly even consider a merger - has named finalists for the 2007 program year. See page 10, and be sure to learn more about them and attend a celebration of the excellence in our nonprofit community by attending the Oct. 23 ONE Awards program. For more information or to register, go to: **cincinnati.bizjournals.com/cincinnati/event/3630**.

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