

LOCAL NEWS

Esteemed economist says nonprofits must strategize to survive lean times

By CASEY S. ELLIOTT
Messenger staff journalist

An estimated 50 people representing various nonprofit agencies throughout the area attended the 2011 Nonprofit Conference held Tuesday at Ohio University. It featured a financial consultant whose resume includes stints with Harvard University and the Federal Reserve Bank.

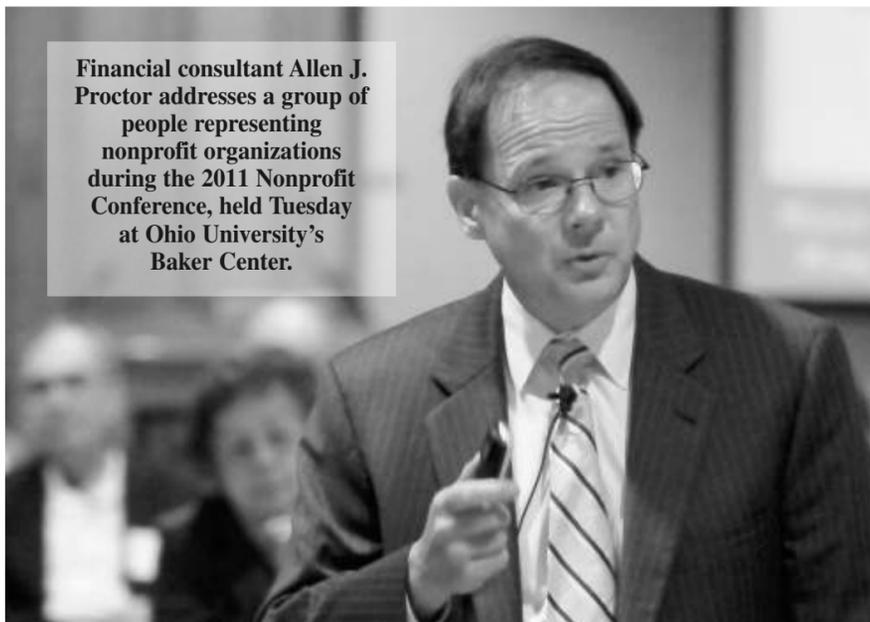
His advice? Given the prevalence of unfunded mandates and the dwindling funding at all levels of government, nonprofit organizations must start thinking more like for-profit entities if they are to survive.

"The only way to solve your problems is to be strategic," said Allen J. Proctor, the founder and principal of Allen Proctor Consulting LLC. Proctor conceded, however, that thinking about profitability when you are a part of a nonprofit is a foreign concept, more suited to a traditional business.

"If you are a nonprofit, you are doing something that cannot be done profitably," he said. "You are supposed to lose money."

Proctor is a graduate of Harvard and received a doctorate in economics and forecasting from the University of Wisconsin at Madison. He has worked as the chief financial officer and vice president for finance at Harvard, as deputy budget director for New York City, as executive director of the New York State Financial Control Board, and as division chief for the Federal Reserve Bank of New York.

Proctor said that at their core, nonprofits serve some sort of vital community need, and that need is not likely to generate revenue. Nonprofits, he added, can balance their budgets — or even make a little bit of money — doing ancillary projects that support the overall organization, and Proctor urged attendees to consider that option. He said often in tough



Financial consultant Allen J. Proctor addresses a group of people representing nonprofit organizations during the 2011 Nonprofit Conference, held Tuesday at Ohio University's Baker Center.

Messenger photo by John Halley

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financial times, nonprofits — like other agencies — tend to slash funding for vital services, and that needs to stop.

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Proctor said nonprofits started struggling in the 1990s, which, he said, is about the same time the term "unfunded mandate" emerged. Those mandates included everything from Medicaid to educational funding, and, Proctor said, they resulted in the federal government passing the buck to local governments. When local governments could not provide services, they turned to nonprof-

its. Among the examples given by Proctor were food pantries and programs to help the mentally ill.

"Governments used nonprofits to insulate citizens from government cuts," he said.

Proctor encouraged those working with nonprofit organizations to strategically look at their organization, its key mission and the services it provides. He said if the organization's mission and its services do not align with a community need, the nonprofit should reevaluate its services. And if the nonprofit is providing a service that other organizations are providing, it should rethink providing that service.

He noted that nonprofits tend to fall into the trap of trying to expand services during a good

financial year, but when there is an economic downturn, they are then faced with cutting services.

"You have to think about am I going to be reliable for 50 clients, or unreliable for 75," he said.

Proctor added nonprofits should review the grants they receive and determine if the grant is really supporting its core mission. He encouraged nonprofit leadership to consider turning down a grant that involves paying the money out for doing a service that the grantee wants, rather than what is vital to the mission of the nonprofit. This goes for any government contracts for services as well, he said.

In addition to Proctor's keynote address, those who attended the Nonprofit Conference, sponsored by the Regional Nonprofit Alliance, participated in informational sessions on governance, fundraising planning, and nonprofit sustainability.

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Write-in candidate files for Alexander board

2 current members may join Ralph Harvey

ALBANY — A write-in candidate has filed for the Alexander Local School Board, which until now had no candidates because the two incumbents failed to meet a deadline for filing for the November ballot.

Ralph Harvey Sr., a 10-year resident of Albany, has filed to be a write-in candidate.

"I think that Alexander ... is an outstanding school district, and I think the board members in the past have done an excellent job," Harvey said Tuesday. "I'm wanting to go in and be of help. ... I am looking forward to the challenge and meeting with the people."

Harvey is retired from Ohio University, where he was a security specialist at Alden Library.

Board members Patrick Lawson and John Hutchison did not file candidacy petitions for the November election by the Aug. 10 deadline, meaning their

names won't be on the ballot. At the time, Hutchison indicated that he was unaware of the deadline and thought it was in September.

Board President Fred Davis said Tuesday that he's talked with both Lawson and Hutchison and it's his understanding that both intend to file as write-ins.

The filing deadline for write-in candidates is Monday at 4 p.m.

Had no one filed, Lawson and Hutchison would have automatically continued on the board if they wished, according to information Athens County Elections Director Debbie Quivey said she received from the Ohio Secretary of State's Office. If only one write-in candidate were to file and be elected, but both Lawson and Hutchison wanted to continue on the board, it would be up to the school board to resolve the dilemma, Quivey said.

CORRECTIONS

Woman released from jail

Heather Christine Fletcher — the mother of 3-year-old Zeva Fletcher of Wooster, who was found in Athens County over the weekend after being reported missing — was released from the Southeastern Ohio Regional Jail on Monday afternoon. An article in Tuesday's Messenger that indicated she was still in jail was based on information from the jail's website, which had not been updated at the time the article was written.

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MEETINGS

Council of Governments

The Southern Ohio Council of Governments will meet on at 10 a.m. Sept. 1 at 150 E. Second St., Chillicothe. For information, call 775-5030.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

911 operation chief job to be posted

The job vacancy of chief of operations for Athens County 911 will be posted in-house for five days, the county commissioners decided Tuesday.

Doug Bentley resigned as chief of operations on Aug. 4, and the commissioners appointed 911 coordinator Scott Warner as interim operations chief.

The chief's job will be posted in-house, with a salary range of \$40,800 to \$46,920. Commissioner Lenny Eliason said an applicant would be considered "in-house" if they are an employee of the commissioners.

If a suitable candidate does not apply, the commissioners plan to next week authorize a wider advertising of the job.

State awards Innovation Center \$500K

The state has awarded \$500,000 to Ohio University's Innovation Center to expand programming to help new high-tech businesses develop and grow, according to a news release from State Rep. Debbie Phillips, D-Athens.

"The Innovation Center has an excellent record of helping new high-tech companies overcome the obstacles to success, and I am pleased that they will be able to enhance their services," she said in the news release. "Their work to support high-tech start-ups through the early development phases has enabled businesses in our community to grow, stabilize, and graduate into independent facilities."

The Innovation Center, operated by OU since 1983 as a business incubator, is part of Ohio's Edison Technology Incubator program. The center currently houses six companies, and the grant will allow it to increase services through student employees and a full-time administrative associate. The center will also expand marketing efforts to recruit new companies as well as work with developers to find space for companies ready to go out on their own.

The Edison Technology Incubator Program was developed by the Ohio Department of Development to help start-up technology businesses in early stages of development.

'Moment of remembrance' approved

The Athens County Commissioners have called for a "moment of remembrance" on Sept. 11 at 1 p.m. for people to stop and remember those who lost their lives in the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

The commissioners approved a resolution Tuesday, in response to a request from the National Association of Counties.

According to an email from the association, U.S. Sen. Frank Lautenberg of New Jersey sponsored and received unanimous support for a Senate resolution calling for a national moment of remembrance. Lautenberg is asking counties, cities and towns across America to sound sirens and ring bells at 1 p.m. on Sept. 11.

Dirt from serial killer's house being sold

CLEVELAND (AP) — An entrepreneur is selling soil from a serial killer's home in Cleveland, outraging victims' families.

The Plain Dealer reports Eric Gein of Jackson, Fla., had an associate fill two sandwich bags with dirt from Anthony Sowell's house two weeks ago and is selling it on the web for \$25 per gram. Gein expects to make a total of \$500.

Sowell was convicted last month of murdering 11 women and dumping their remains around his property. Gein says the soil is valuable to people because Sowell's victims were buried in it. He also says: "We live in a sick world."

Denise Hunter, whose sister was killed, said she hopes people will show compassion for the victims and not buy the dirt.

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