

McCaleb: Volunteers help Raue, nonprofits succeed

Date: June 26, 2010 **Section:** Columns

Volunteers are the cornerstone of any successful nonprofit organization. They donate countless hours and energy, giving selflessly to support a cause they care about and that is important to the community.

In many cases, these **volunteers** also are donating their leadership experience by serving on governing boards.

In today's economy, when funding for nonprofits is declining at alarming rates, **volunteers** often play a much larger role in determining the success of nonprofit organizations.

One such local **volunteer** is Paula Dorion-Gray, who after three years as president of the board of directors of the **Raue** Center for the Arts is stepping down from that post next week.

Dorion-Gray, who's been a member of the **Raue** board for five years, took over as president shortly before the economy's free-fall, when many community theaters across the country began to fail financially.

Under her leadership, and with the support of the entire **volunteer** board and professional staff, the **Raue** this week announced a noteworthy lineup for its 10th anniversary season.

Acts include folk singer Arlo Guthrie, pianists Danny Wright and Emily Bear, and the continuation of Lucy's Café, a monthly night of stand-up comedy.

"As an arts organization, we're still young, about to become a teenager," Executive Director Richard Kuranda said. "When the recession hit, we were in a hard place. But we have a great board and a great community. Paula has been our lighthouse in the storm, putting in above and beyond what a board president should do."

As the economy bled jobs and wages declined, the amount of money residents were able to spend on recreation and the arts also dropped. Anticipating that ticket sales to higher-priced events could be difficult, Dorion-Gray and the **Raue** board made a bold decision.

“We had to take a hard look at what we offered and how we were going to keep our doors open,” said Dorion-Gray, who professionally is president of Dorion-Gray Retirement Planning Inc. of Crystal Lake. “So we had to change to really appease the family and the community as a whole. Rather than bring in the big-name artist, we had to be more community-based.”

Beginning with the 2007-08 season, the **Raue** offered more family-friendly programming and went to a year-round schedule featuring more area talent.

The fact that the **Raue** announced another full season of entertainment as the economy continues to stumble along is indication enough that the move has paid off.

“Getting through the recession has not been an easy task,” Dorion-Gray conceded. “There are theaters closing all over the country. We have a city that supports us as best they can. We need the community to continue to support us.”

With that community support, and the continued leadership of **volunteers** such as Dorion-Gray, the **Raue** will be celebrating new anniversaries decades into the future.

• Dan McCaleb is editor of the Northwest Herald. He can be reached at 815-526-4603, or by e-mail at

dmccaleb@nwherald.com.

To learn more

For a complete list of **Raue** acts, visit www.rauecenter.org

Technical problems: If you have a technical problem with your account please e-mail newslibrary@newsbank.com.

Copyright 2010, Northwest Herald, The (Crystal Lake, IL). All Rights Reserved.