

NONPROFITS ROUNDTABLE

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Link: http://www.utahbusiness.com/articles/view/nonprofits_roundtable/?pg=1

- Laura Hadley, Cystic Fibrosis Foundation Utah Idaho Chapter
- Tom Goldsmith, First Unitarian Church of Salt Lake City
- Paul Parker, Hawkwatch International
- Matt Pacenza, HEAL Utah
- Jeanie Ashby, Maliheh Free Clinic
- Ed Blake, Salt Lake Valley Habitat For Humanity
- Carl Fisher, Save Our Canyons
- Kasandra Verbruggen, Spyhop
- Peter Oliver, The Salvation Army
- Lynette Rasmussen, Utah After School Network
- Jason Stevenson, Utah Health Policy Project
- Chris Bray, Utah Nonprofits Association
- Patty Shreve, Utah Nonprofits Association
- Chris Zimmerman, Weber School District Foundation
- Arlyn Bradshaw, Best Friends Animal Society
- Scott Bean, Kids on the Move

We'd like to thank Chris Bray, CEO of the Utah Nonprofits Association, for moderating the discussion.

More than 4,000 nonprofits operate in the state of Utah, accounting for 10 percent of the gross domestic product of the state. But more importantly, they impact quality of life for Utahns in areas as diverse as arts and culture, health and human services, youth and education, and environment and more. Here, nonprofit leaders discuss the challenges facing their organizations, and how the businesses community can best aid their missions.

As nonprofits, you're on the cutting edge of issues facing the people and places of Utah. What are some of the emerging issues that you want Utah business leaders to understand?

RASMUSSEN: The issues facing youth and children in our state have to do with education and poverty. We know the debate about ways to reform education and ways to address poverty in our state—that we should be providing learning experiences and opportunities to help students prepare for jobs in our sophisticated and technological age. As business and nonprofit leaders, we know there is no silver bullet to either of these

Industry Outlook

The grid contains 18 headshots of participants, each with a caption below it:

- Jeanie Ashby, Maliheh Free Clinic
- Scott Bean, Kids on the Move
- Ed Blake, Salt Lake Valley Habitat For Humanity
- Arlyn Bradshaw, Best Friends Animal Society - Utah
- Mona Burton, Holland & Hart
- Carl Fisher, Save Our Canyons
- Tom Goldsmith, First Unitarian Church
- Laura Hadley, Cystic Fibrosis Foundation
- Peter Oliver, The Salvation Army
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issues. Improving education achievements and addressing poverty, particularly intergenerational poverty, will require the knitting together of many approaches. But as we look for workable solutions, we should focus some serious attention on the hours before and after school, and in the summer.

Our goal at Utah After School Network is to provide young people with more learning opportunities so they can experience a full range of enriching activities, including music and the arts, and be exposed to the latest in STEM education and technology. These types of activities will help prepare our kids to graduate from high school, go on to post-secondary or trade schools, or military training, and to have and develop healthy interpersonal skills and relationships. And then to be able to have successful lives and be productive citizens.

ZIMMERMAN: I would like business leaders to know what I know as a nonprofit leader. As nonprofit leaders, all of us understand the issues that are happening in our community, probably better than anybody does, because we're there. My focus is in education. I work with the teachers. I work with the students. I work with the administrators. I understand what's going on.

If business leaders truly want to get involved in their community, they should get involved in their nonprofits. Then they will understand better what is needed in their communities. I've had a lot of business leaders say, "I don't want to be on another board. They just want to ask me for money." No, I want them to be on my board so they understand the issues and what I'm doing to fix those issues. And they'll want to be involved. They'll ask us to be involved.

What innovations have you put in place to respond to changes in the market and the changing needs of your clients and customers?

STEVENSON: One of the things UHPP tries to do is identify the systematic logjams in our healthcare system. As nonprofits, we all like to work on the individual family basis, the child basis, the animal situation basis. You can make progress by doing those one-off success stories. But to really make change, you have to do something systematic. That's the challenge of nonprofits—moving to that scale. How do you do that?

At UHPP, we've decided to focus on implementing the Affordable Care Act in Utah, getting people enrolled in Medicaid and in private insurance on Healthcare.gov. We realized there were going to be problems, glitches. And you might remember Healthcare.gov didn't work so well when it launched back in 2013. So we had our 120 navigators across the state identify where those glitches were coming up. And they were able to report back to us here in Salt Lake, and we were able to go to HHS or go to other experts and get the solutions, and then disseminate those solutions down the line to all of our navigators across the state.

As a nonprofit, we were able to be at the center of the issue and work with partners across the state to make sure that we weren't just fixing individual issues, but we were creating solutions that people could implement on a massive scale.

What role do you think businesses can play in solving some of these problems?

GOLDSMITH: We all have different issues warranting different solutions. The Unitarian Church is collaborating with the IRC, the International Rescue Committee. Our church is, I believe, the only congregation that actually furnishes all the apartments when the refugees come in. We get a call from the IRC, and they'll say, "We've got two families," meaning a total group of about six or seven people with kids, "coming in from Bosnia." And then we furnish the apartments and get them ready for those families.

First, it would be great if the business community became aware of how much they throw away in furniture, and that so many of these things have a second life, in fact, a really good second life. We would be really happy to work out picking up the furniture. We have about 50 volunteers from the church involved in just the IRC project. So we're adept at picking up stuff and then storing it and then moving it to apartments when we need it.

And second, one of the big issues with refugees is that a very high proportion were professionals in the country from which they are fleeing. The door of opportunity is simply slammed to these professionals. I would hope that the business community might consider working with the First Unitarian Church in terms of providing work, business opportunities, for many of these highly skilled people. They come here and really take the most menial jobs

imaginable because the doors are closed to them. For the most part, and against many of the stereotypes, their English is really pretty good because, internationally, people do business in English primarily.

OLIVER: When it comes to businesses, it's nice to get a check once in a while, but—and don't kill me for saying this—but, we could really use more heart, more effort from the business community. More commitment. For example, if we started a GED program and had them sponsor it and provide people to help run it, teachers, things like that. It's more than just a dollar.

In our particular zip code, we have the highest number of incarcerated individuals. In other words, a family member is incarcerated or those people themselves. So they're in this cycle, and they're constantly going around and around. Our goal is to break that. We want to try to get the parents educated. We want to get the children educated. Parents have never gone to college, so how can they push their kids to go to college?

If the business world could get into that cycle and help the nonprofits do that—educate and break that cycle—that's huge. And honestly, you can't put a dollar number on that. It's just going to take people and effort.

Nonprofits have many of the same issues that businesses do, like increasing revenue, market, and taking a program to scale. What are some of the critical business or organizational development issues facing your nonprofits?

PACENZA: Utah is a group that is pretty well established and has a good reputation as a professional, well-run environmental organization. We're proud of the work we've done on our core issues. But when you're an advocacy group in a place like Utah, the menu of what you could work on is quite vast. There are new problems that present themselves and new issues you could choose to insert yourself into. One of our big challenges is trying to figure out if we should we expand in those ways.

A few years ago, HEAL invested most of our time working on nuclear waste issues and watchdogging the activities of EnergySolutions. That work started to fade for some complicated reasons. And simultaneous to that, the issue of air quality became a bigger issue here in the valley. So we saw an opportunity to step into that. And we've had some significant successes, and it helped grow the organization. It's work that people like and want to support.

The interesting place we're in now is there is another issue that's growing in importance, that people are looking to see if someone will step into a breach and work on, and that would be climate. We all know that we have less snow and less water, and we have increased risk of forest fire and impacts on agriculture.

These things are happening and they're happening now. They're presenting real risks and damages to Utah. I don't think there's a single paid environmental advocacy job in northern Utah right now working on climate issues. So that's an area we're thinking of pushing into.

But then the problem is: Are you just going to a place because maybe there's funding there, because it's the sexy issue of the day? Are you going there because you bring something unique? Are you going to spread the organization too thin? Are there resources to add staff? Those are some of the challenges and questions we're working through right now.

BLAKE: In the business world, at 22 floors up, a lot of times you don't see the need in the community. One of our challenges is to let people know that we have these issues, and sometimes they're third world issues that we don't expect to be here. There's a woman in her 70s that almost froze to death in a house that's probably less than a mile from here. She was removed from the house in the dead of winter with the threat of dying in her home because she didn't have heat and the house was of ill repair. So the first challenge we have is letting people know that we have problems in our community.

Another thing we need to consider is encouraging nonprofits to work together and get our money to stretch farther. For instance, we had a project where the husband was in a wheelchair, the wife was blind, and we needed to go back in and do some work. We're not the best people to do handicap retrofits. There's actually another nonprofit that does that, and that's their center point. So why wouldn't we call them up and give them a better client that they're looking for in the community, and they help us, and in the end we spend a lot less money.

First Unitarian Church, you say, “I’m looking for furniture.” Well, I’ve got a whole warehouse full of furniture. And we often give it to other nonprofits. As a community we need to work together better. The business community is expecting us to really work harder to stretch farther with the limited amount of dollars that we have coming to us.

A lot of businesses want to get involved in nonprofits, but they just don’t know how. It’s incumbent on us to reach out and show them how their involvement would work: Your involvement is either going to be time, knowledge, materials or money. And, quite frankly, we’re OK with any of those four. If a business wants to come teach us something, we’re fine with that. If they want to give money, of course we’re fine with that.

How can businesses and their leaders partner with nonprofits to solve some of these organizational needs?

BEAN: Businesses have a great opportunity to work with nonprofits, especially in their particular area of expertise. We’ve benefitted from a cloud provider, a CRM, that has a foundation and provides nonprofits with a certain number of licenses that makes it enormously easy for us to do some of the things that we need to do organizationally.

It’s not just the software companies, it’s any service company in particular and other companies in general. As much as we benefit from the volunteer time and hours, companies can also bring their particular area of expertise, whether it’s financial or legal or supplies and materials.

PARKER: The first thing is there needs to be a realization that for-profit and nonprofit businesses all have a stake in protecting and improving the quality of life in this state. The projections are that in the next 25 to 30 years the population of Utah will double. Think about that in terms of everything we do, whether it’s education or wildlife or air quality, water use, all these things. For-profit businesses have a real stake for their employees and for recruiting to make sure this state has a good quality of life. There’s a lot of different things the business community can do, but educating their employees about some of these issues is important.

The other thing, obviously, is funding. In 2013, the total amount of donations for all nonprofits in this country was \$335 billion. Now that includes churches, universities, hospitals, everything. Five percent of that came from corporations. Only 5 percent. The business community has the capacity and they have the self-interest, frankly, to support the nonprofit community to deal with these issues. There’s real reason for them to be involved and support the nonprofit community in a variety of ways. Very often I think it’s something they do to help their public image and there’s a little bit of money to spread thinly—but there’s a real self-interest and there’s a real need. They need to step up and be more active in supporting the nonprofit community.

ZIMMERMAN: I’m going to take off my hat as a director. I’m a board member on eight boards. We just hired an executive director for Prevent Child Abuse Utah. The Boys and Girls Club needed a new director up in Weber County. We’re finding a lot of people that have a lot of heart and are involved in these organizations and they’re program people. There’s very few that have leadership skills. We’re struggling to find leaders to run our nonprofits. I’m not talking about people that don’t love the organization. I’m talking about true leadership skills—they know how to manage, they know how to communicate, they know how to listen.

We need businesses to get involved as board members and teach leadership skills. And they are the leaders. They’re the ones that have grown their corporations. If they could do that to help us, that would be a lot.

What do you think is unique about running a nonprofit in Utah?

VERBRUGGEN: One of the things that is really unique here in the state is that we don’t have a large, national foundation. The funding in this state is driven by very philanthropic families, based on the time they’ve spent here and the legacy they want to leave in this state.

There’s a very entrepreneurial mindset here. A lot of our leaders are very capitalist oriented; they speak that language. And they want us all to speak that language as well. They want us all to operationalize and monetize and develop earned income streams and be self-sufficient. While that certainly has motivated all of us to really look at our models and how we fund ourselves, it can be really challenging to a lot of organizations whose missions aren’t necessarily oriented toward monetizing them. How do you earn income as a nonprofit organization to support your work? More and more, we’re being pushed. It’s challenging us and we’re having to rethink our missions a little bit.

Whether it's unique to Utah, I don't know. Although there's some huge companies that are supporting of the nonprofit community, it's a little bit different here.

FISHER: Utah is defined by its landscape. The magnitude of the Wasatch Mountains—it's truly an honor for me to be working on those issues and the quality of life that these mountains bring to our communities, whether for recreation purposes or protecting our municipal water supply. It's really unique that in the state of Utah, regardless of your industry, because of our size you can see the issues that groups are working on, and you can also see the results of a nonprofit organization's work.

Utah also just intrinsically has a really invested focus in community. That's a really positive thing for nonprofit organizations. Because a lot of the things that we do, we need business support for, but we also need people. And there is a very tight community here willing to help various nonprofits reach their goals.

Utah's small given the size of the state, the geography of the state. But we're growing. It's a significant opportunity for us to try and shape the future, to learn from the mistakes of some of our neighboring states and try and grow smarter as we're growing. Some of the fastest-growing regions in the country are right in Utah.

As we're growing, we're seeing more people come here, more ideas, and it's been really amazing to me to engage with people, with businesses from other places across the country to gather some of their perspectives. That's something that makes Utah really unique.

If you could send a tweet to Utah's business community, what would it be?

BRADSHAW: Initially my instinct was to say something pithy about the work of my own organization and our accomplishments. Then I thought on behalf of all us I should just tweet, "Give us all your money."

But I think the gist of the question is what would we want to share? So I would tweet: "Nonprofits are 10 percent of Utah's economy, but our impact is far greater."

RASMUSSEN: "Did you know that children spend approximately 1,000 hours per year in school and 6,000 hours out of school? So Utah after school programs turn non-school hours into learning hours."

ASHBY: "Everybody can do something to make a difference in their community. Choose a cause that you and your employees are passionate about and step up and do something about it."

STEVENSON: Businesses in Utah know that 3.4 percent is the unemployment rate in our state now. That's a huge concern to businesses trying to attract employees and keep employees. So you can insert your own statistic after that 3.4 percent unemployment. For us, it would be "40 percent uninsured for people living under 200 percent of poverty." But for other organizations it could be the number of hours kids spend in front of TVs. The number of animals that go without a home. The percentage of watershed in our canyons. So that's something that businesses need to realize—that if they want to create a good quality of life and a good workforce, they have to think about things beyond just the unemployment rate.

BLAKE: "Working side by side with a nonprofit provides workers the opportunity to reduce the suffering of others while increasing a sense of community within the company."

HADLEY: I'd use my favorite quote, which is a Teddy Roosevelt quote: "Do what you can with what you have where you are. You can't do everything, but do something. Just be doing something."

GOLDSMITH: If it's a succinct message it would be "Change the conversation."

Everyone around this table is deeply involved and committed to enhancing the quality of life. And so much of our work is related to the environment. It's Save the Canyons. It's clean air. It's clean water. And the biggest obstacle that we all face is the Utah State Legislature. That's the elephant we've somehow ignored. We try to enhance the quality of life. And every time we do, the Legislature says, "That is going to impact business in a negative way." So we seem

to have the choice between quality of life and protecting business interests. And the choice is so obvious, at least for all of us here, that of course saving lives, clearing the air, is of highest importance.

I need the business community to respond to the Legislature and say, "Wait a minute. You're always using us as a front for very conservative politics. But in fact business will take a look at enhancing the quality of life in Utah. Don't go around saying that this is really bad for the business environment. Let us speak for ourselves."

So I'm asking to change the conversation and for the business community to find its voice and speak up to the Utah Legislature.

PARKER: The issue that really brings this to the forefront is air quality. We've had an air quality issue along the Wasatch Front for years. We've known about it. We've talked about it. But once the business community decided that negative air quality in this state was going to have a negative impact on attracting business and employees to this state, all of a sudden that became a big issue. And they took it to the Legislature. And the Legislature responded in this past year with money and programs to deal with air quality in a way that wasn't anywhere near that level in the past.

So the business community has a real role to play in terms of policy, looking at the quality of life in this state and urging the Legislature to take action. Air quality is a good example of what they can do when they want to do it, and the Legislature will respond to it.

What advice would you give to someone who is interested in starting their own nonprofit?

ASHBY: I would tell them to look at the nonprofits that already exist. Because one of the differences between nonprofits and businesses is that collaboration is more important than competition. It's really important for somebody who is starting a nonprofit to look at what's out there and ask themselves if they can make a difference in an existing organization that already has the infrastructure, rather than putting resources and time and energy into starting something new. If those organizations already exist in your community, put your support and your power and your passion behind those that have already learned some of the lessons.

BRAY: We have over 4,000 501(c)(3)s in our state, and there's probably a nonprofit that is already doing similar work. Can you increase their capacity? Every nonprofit I've ever talked to needs more people sitting around the table that are passionate about their problem.

Funders will say to me, "Why is it that I receive five different proposals for organizations that look like they're serving similar geographic areas and similar people? Why can't you all get together and work this out?"

And I say to them, "Because it's the way you're funding nonprofit organizations. Could we work together with you as a business community and help you come together around capacity-building players?" We're starting those conversations.

FISHER: I'll give the Save Our Canyons example. We work on a landscape that is 200 linear miles north to south, and probably at its longest point maybe it's 30 miles wide. And we have three full-time staff people that work on that landscape. If there's someone that comes into this community that says, "I really want to protect our mountains and I want to start an organization to do that," the impact by joining us is far more significant than the infrastructure it takes to create a new nonprofit organization. We thrive off of passion and ideas. But we want you to bring those ideas to our organizations so that we can continue innovating solutions to achieve our respective missions.

BRADSHAW: When it comes to animal welfare, frankly, every breed of dog has its own nonprofit working specifically for it. But the ultimate goal of all of us is to save the lives of these animals.

What we've done is create a coalition of these organizations that have like-minded goals. We call it our No Kill Utah Coalition. It's comprised of about 50 other organizations, mostly other nonprofits, that are smaller and maybe have more of a niche. What Best Friends provides is leadership to ensure we are working together, sharing strategies and trying to push the other organizations in a direction that meets the overall goal.

We have an annual event called Strut Your Mutt, which is a great fundraiser. We actually do that now in 10 cities across the country. But it started here in Salt Lake. It's a fundraiser for Best Friends, but it actually mostly benefits our smaller nonprofit coalition partners, as we put the event on and they get to raise the money. We also have our Super Adoption Weekends that we've been doing at the Fair Park. All of our coalition members are invited to come, and Best Friends is, again, leading the initiative. Hundreds of animals are adopted in a given weekend from all of these organizations coming together and showcasing the work they are doing.

Our goal is to end shelter killing in the state of Utah by 2019. And as of last year, 77 percent of all the animals that went into Utah shelters were saved. That's an improvement. In 2000, only about 44 percent of the pets entering state shelters were leaving alive. So we are getting there.

What challenges have you faced in strengthening your revenue streams?

OLIVER: I actually have a question. I've only been in the nonprofit world for about two years. I ran a business for 30 years—which is beneficial for me, because I can see both sides of it. It's very competitive in the business world. And I'm noticing it's that way in the nonprofits. It's almost like who has the most passion wins. Whoever builds the biggest organization wins. It adds to another frustration of nonprofits—there's only so many doors you can knock to get money and get help. And so we do need to work together.

STEVENSON: I've got an answer to Peter's question that could work for both businesses and nonprofits. I think there's some misunderstanding about the roles. Nonprofits often work in the underserved areas. They work on the issues that are off of the marketplace's radar. They work with underserved people, underserved issues, underserved animals. And businesses benefit from what nonprofits do, even if it's indirectly.

Here's maybe one way to describe it: No one ever washes a rental car, right? Because there's no utility for that. You're just helping out the rental car company. But nonprofits are washing the rental cars—that's what we do. We work on the issues for which there's no benefit really out there in the marketplace. No direct benefit. No monetary benefit for the most part. Otherwise a business would be in there doing this job more efficiently.

So nonprofits should look for businesses that when we're washing these rental cars, we're actually helping them out. And for us, that would be health insurance companies. So those are the groups we go to for funding, for partnerships. Because there's a synergy, there's connection there. We can explain the benefits that we provide. Businesses should look for nonprofits that are washing the rental cars in their sphere. Those are the people they should gravitate to and learn from and, hopefully, fund as well. Find those areas where the nonprofits are helping the businesses advance their message and their mission.

BRAY: When you look nationally at nonprofits, 50 percent of nonprofits have some type of a fee-based service that they're selling. Our largest nonprofit that provides an IRS 990 form, Intermountain Healthcare, is a very large fee-for-service organization.

To Jason's point, we're not always washing the car. Sometimes we are directly competing with businesses. And I get that question of why are nonprofits tax exempt when they're offering services that are competing in a healthcare market or in an education field or in a media field or whatever. My answer to them is that we are mission-focused and we are solution-based. When you invest in a nonprofit, you're leveraging funds, you're leveraging volunteerism, you're leveraging resources and expertise in a way that small businesses are not set up to do.

Arts and museums are very fee-based. Habitat for Humanity has The Restore, which brings in revenue, but it helps them provide their mission-driven services. So we have to keep an open mind about the role of nonprofits. But we always say diversify your funding. Because that is a smart way to sustain your mission over time.

How is the growing demand for measurement and accountability impacting your organization?

BLAKE: The nonprofit industry is changing dramatically in that we're not a community that can just say, "I helped this many people." The industry is looking for more of why? Why did you do that work? Show me empirical data that shows what relationship that has to improving our community.

At Habitat we used to say, well, we house this many adults and we house this many children. That was our measurement. I see the nonprofit industry changing dramatically. If we don't get onboard, it's going to be the train

leaving the station and we'll be still standing at the station. OK, you put them in a house, but then what happens? We're trying to track right now, well, how many parents improved their education and got a promotion at work and made better wages? How many of the kids graduated from high school? How many of them went on to college? There's a whole array of other things we've got to start keeping track of and providing feedback to the community that we are making a difference.

When we go to the business community for help, they say, "Let us help you with your accounting." I can hire someone to do the accounting. That's not the tough part. Help me design a model that follows all of these data attributes and makes a compelling argument for what we're doing, and can pinpoint how to adjust our mission if we need to in order to get better results.

Give me a business that says, "Let us step into that arena and let us help you with that element. And then maybe we come alongside you to get that data point. Maybe we come alongside you to offer up volunteers that can help you with that. But don't send me an accountant.

VERBRUGGEN: Across the nation, we're seeing a trend around collective impact. And there are some collective impact efforts that are happening here locally.

Best Friends is a good example. What you have done by bringing together a coalition of organizations is you are all filling a really important niche, but collectively you're doing something bigger than each of you can do by yourselves. And Best Friends serves as this backbone organization that's able to bolster and leverage and build and create and impact that's bigger than ourselves.

Businesses are a key partner in collective impact. They shouldn't necessarily be left out of that conversation. There is funding out there that's available to do this kind of thing. But, Ed, when you're talking about these bigger, larger, broader outcomes, each individual organization may not be measuring those outcomes, but collectively if you can measure those outcomes, then we will be able to tell a story that is greater than just ourselves.

BRAY: Every nonprofit knows measurement and that deep dive data-driven message is not ever going to go away. We've got to make sure we're measuring the right things and not nonsense. And we've got to do it longitudinally. Nobody really wants to fund that, but everybody asks for it. So how do we do it? And it is a big trend. It's not a flash in the pan; it's here to stay.

BLAKE: And to dovetail on that, I think good, successful businesses do it well.

BRAY: They do. And they have metrics in place. And they spend a lot of money on infrastructure and people to track that. Being able to partner with one of those businesses and use their infrastructure or their tools to do that would be a huge way businesses could impact nonprofits.