

Nonprofit Heroes

Competition Helps Small Business to Help Nonprofits



For a small business, the number of requests from nonprofits can be overwhelming. Heartwood Media, a three-person production services firm in Manchester, receives more requests for pro bono video services than it can accommodate.

"I understand the services we provide can be a big boon for a nonprofit," says Chris Conroy, creative director of Heartwood Media, who has served on nonprofit boards. However, his firm has limited resources.

That's why Conroy looked to a program that Brown & Company, a marketing firm in Portsmouth, established to deal with requests. It set up an application process for nonprofits to request services and the staff would then select one nonprofit each year to provide pro bono marketing services. "We decided to adopt [that model] and looked at how we could do it so it works for us," Conroy says. Now nonprofits can log onto www.heartwoodmedia.com to take the company's Nonprofit Challenge by filling out an application to argue their case why they should be selected to receive a free video program. Conroy says he is basically looking for a nonprofit's elevator pitch

and to see how they would use the video as part of a strategic plan.

Prior to establishing the Nonprofit Challenge, many nonprofits would request Conroy film an event with no real plan as to how they would later use the video. "I want to make sure it's the right tool at the right time of their development," he says.

The first recipient of Heartwood's video program in 2006 was the Family Resource Center at Gorham. "We saw it was a hard hit area of New Hampshire and it's amazing what they do, the extent of their programs and how central they are to that area," Conroy says.

Heartwood created an eight-minute DVD for the Family Resource Center at Gorham explaining the organization's mission and various programs. The project included two days of shooting as well as editing time. Had this been a commercial project, the cost would have been about \$10,000 to \$20,000, Conroy says. Heartwood Media provided the Family Resource Center at Gorham with 25 copies of the DVD, which it has sent to major donors and prospective donors to encourage investment in its endowment fund.

Conroy says the Nonprofit Challenge attracts 30 to 35 applications each year.

As of press time, Heartwood Media had yet to announce its 2007 winner. The application process begins in November and ends in January. The advantage of having the program in place is it allows Heartwood to control when requests for assistance come in and to set a time frame that fits with the workload it is handling at the time. "We can be more thoughtful about the project. Our application makes [nonprofits] think a bit more about what they're trying to do. It's very rewarding," he says. ■