

# Company teaches nonprofits how to raise money

By **CLAY HOLTZMAN**  
STAFF WRITER

A local fundraising consultant to the nonprofit sector says it's proving that donor fatigue is a myth — at least for its clients that learn to build solid relationships with philanthropists.

Raising More Money Inc. is a 45-employee, Seattle-based, for-profit consulting outfit that teaches its nonprofit organization clients a four-step approach to building relationships with individual donors.

The goal, said Raising More Money founder and CEO Terry Axelrod, is to get nonprofits to build donor support to a long-term level where sustainabil-

ity is reached, instead of chasing grant after grant. Private philanthropists, the firm says, are valuable because they give more money, usually donate for the long term and are more likely to become engaged with a certain cause.

"I've been there myself as a founder of three nonprofits," she said. "Knowing how frustrating it can be to have to stay on that treadmill year after year, it's so depressing."

Last year could have been particularly challenging for some local nonprofits as natural disasters wreaked havoc around the globe and Americans opened their pocketbooks to re-

lieve the pain. However, Raising More Money's Axelrod says her nearly 250 clients simply didn't experience donor fatigue — dispelling the notion that philanthropists were tapped out by too many requests for donations. Last year, 248 Raising More Money clients pulled in \$50.5 million — the highest fundraising level in the company's history. In 2004, its 220 clients collected about \$38.4 million.

Raising More Money, which is 10 years old, has counseled more than 2,500 clients and has tutored groups in all 50 states, Canada and Europe. Its four-step system includes connecting organizational missions with donors,

following up to gauge their interest, inviting them to fundraising events and then thanking them for their contributions in a way that further builds on the existing relationship.

"This is a complete shift in the paradigm of how we were doing it as compared to how we are doing it now," said Donna Batter, annual fund director at Bellevue's Washington Women in Need, a nonprofit that provides services to low-income women.

Batter's group went through the Raising More Money educational program two years ago.

In 2004, the nonprofit's two annual fundraisers generated about \$255,000. But by 2006, the second year of implementing the four-step model, Washington Women in Need fundraisers generated a record \$820,000 in gifts and donations.

Grace Pandithurai, projects manager with the Dallas-based Texas division of the Salvation Army, which works with all Salvation Army agencies in the state, said Axelrod's program helped her agencies grow their donor base, increase contributions and secure five-year donation commitments from one-third of all donors.

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**Carol Borgmann, vice president of communications, Washington chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals**

The model works for organizations because it is simple and relies on a direct appeal to individuals, said Carol Borgmann, vice president of communications with the Washington chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals.

"Terry has laid things out in a very practical way and all of her theory is based on sound development theory. She didn't re-invent the wheel, she just packaged it into a nice plan," said Borgmann, who herself has implemented Axelrod's techniques.

But at a price of \$12,000 for a year's worth of workshops and coaching, the program can be costly.

"While the \$12,000 seems like a lot, the return is a lot. And the first year is usually the lowest," Axelrod said.

Trina Westerlund, executive director at the Mercer Island-based Children's Institute for Learning Differences, said the program helped her organization do more than just collect money.

"We're finding that people are offering us much more than money. They are offering their contacts, connections and experiences, which very often is just what you need, not just that check," Westerlund said.