Candlelighters Strategic Plan & Board Retreat
Priorities and Action Plan
November 15, 2023

Overview: The Candlelighters Board of Directors met on November 14 to review its current state of the union from your Executive Director and finding and observations by Jeff Stys of Strategic Decisions Associates. After the review, Jeff facilitated a conversation with members to determine broad goals for the organization. Below are the priorities that emerged from the meeting along with action steps, individuals responsible and broad timelines. The organization is in a very positive position with solid relationships, strong programming and a healthy cash balance.

Program

Finding #1: The state of Candlelighters programs are strong. The organization’s core capacity is the work of Parent Consultants working with families of children with cancer in local hospitals. This was confirmed by the organization’s hospital partners.

Goal 1: Place additional Parent Consultants in existing hospitals to meet the existing needs of families.

Action: Lynn and the Candlelighter staff will develop a series of recommendations on increasing the number of Parent Consultants at existing hospitals. For this, the staff will look at existing needs being met, speak with hospital partners and current Parent Consultants and investigate if there are ways to increase the amount of time staff are currently spending at the hospitals. The recommendations are likely to include:

- The number and sequencing of new Parent Consultants
- Additional staffing costs and expected increase in financial assistance

Timing: Lynn will report back to the Board in February.

Finding #2: Parking assistance is a core service that is extremely valued by families. Based on volume and process, Parent Consultants are spending their valuable time processing and reporting on parking assistance. There is also the need to address family requests for parking that come after working hours and on weekends.

Goal 2: Investigate and develop tools that will allow smooth delivery of parking access for families and lessen the time burden for parent consultants.

Action: Create a Parking Technology Taskforce that will be responsible for identifying most appropriate technology tools to improve the parking assistance process for Parent Consultants and families. Once the tools are identified, the group will connect with the appropriate individuals to begin tool development.

Taskforce Membership: Chris, Jay, Linda (and son). Jeff has volunteered to help with assisting the taskforce to identify the business problem and prioritize specific actions. Will need to work with Parent Consultants, ED, AD, Program Director and hospital personnel to see what is doable.

Timing: TBD
Development

Finding: Candlelighters has had a very strong fundraising program centered on special events. Each of their four core special events have grown income over the past few years. Consider not adding more events, but growing the ones we currently have in place, as we are currently “event heavy.”

Goal 1: Continue the focus on core special events with a concentration on increasing the revenue at each event.

Increase corporate sponsorship, target Industries include
- Oil and Gas, Energy
- Technology
- Legal
- Hospital Partners
- Pharmaceutical
- Construction
- Automotive

Staff need introductions to industry representatives from Board members in order to get new companies and businesses involved. The Development Director should concentrate on securing new business contacts in order to grow.

Timing: Ongoing

Goal 2: Increase Foundation Giving

Action: Staff need introductions to foundations from Board members

Timing: Ongoing

Board of Directors

Finding: Candlelighters has a committed, dedicated Board of Directors. There are a few areas the Board will focus on to continue its development.

Goal 1: Reimage and revive the Advisory Committee.

Action Items: A Board Task Force will convene and identify a path forward as a way to communicate with existing Advisory Board members and identify new members. The Taskforce will clarify the role of the advisory committee and individual committee members.
Taskforce Membership: Cindi, Linda and Lisa.

Timing: TBD. The Taskforce will report back with a plan of action and roles for board members on DATE.

Goal 2: Review and make recommendations to revise the existing organization by-laws

Action Item: Convene a board Taskforce to review and make recommendations for by-law revisions. Areas discussed at the board retreat:
- Consideration of adding new members
- Consideration of transition from staff to board membership
- Consideration of the requirement that Parent Consultants must be parents of children who experienced cancer. (*Although this was not specifically discussed at the board retreat, Candlelighters staff asked this to be included as it greatly impacts the ability to identify and hire additional Parent Consultants.*)
- Review all bylaws

Taskforce Membership: Alex, Lisa, Chris, Brad, Cindi and Linda

Timing: TBD

Human Resources

Finding: The strength of the organization is reelected in the strengths, skills and dedication of the Candlelighters staff members. There is an opportunity to make new investments in developing and rewarding current staff members. The organization has grown both in services and fundraising and it’s important to be sure the organizational infrastructure develops along with this growth.

Goal 1: Conduct a compensation analysis comparing Candlelighters to similar organizations. The United Way produces a compensation study that can be an effective starting point of reference. Based on the analysis, make appropriate adjustments to staff salaries.

Timing: Lynn will make report back to board dependent on release of United Way Compensation Study or a similar available study

Goal 2: Identify and secure appropriate Human Resources assistance that can be called upon when facing complex employee-related issues. The Board has suggested a local HR advisor who could advise staff when HR issue occurs. Consider adding an HR expert to the Board of Directors. Board members are committed to helping find an HR company and HR attorney to advise as needed.

Timing: Lynn, with assistance of board members, will make report back to board as soon as possible
**Goal 3:** Develop an overall staff development plan. Identify both group and individual areas for investment. Develop an annual professional development budget based on findings.

Timing: Lynn will make a report back to board as soon as possible.

**Other Items Discussed:**
- Revive the Young Professionals group
- Increase scale of practical support to families with hospitalized children
- Identify need for additional office staff support
- Identify the need for diversifying and adding new Board members
- Take a dive into data
  - Parking assistance - who is getting help? What is the scale of need being met?
  - New registrations - what percentage of families are receiving assistance?
- Legacy giving is not a current priority but should be considered a ‘backburner’ issue
- What is available as Education Resources for families?
- Newsletter revised to twice a year, consider a hybrid hard copy/electronic version - survey donors and families to see what type of newsletter they prefer.