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carrier billed text-to-give service—to determine that a nonprofit has a minimum of \$500,000 in revenue before the charity can qualify to use the service, Plank said. “The only way I can be assured of this is through the Form 990 that charities also file with GuideStar, so GuideStar Charity Check has become an extraordinarily important tool on behalf of us and the carriers.”

Plank also said that the nonprofit sector is just beginning to recognize and utilize the mobile tool, and that it’s not simply for disaster relief, where donors can donate \$5 or \$10 on their mobile phones and have donations placed on their bills. Today, nonprofits place mobile giving platforms on their websites, and information in their emails, direct marketing campaigns, at special events and in their newsletters, he said.

MobileCause also has products that don’t require nonprofits to generate \$500,000 in revenue, where donors can make any size donation via a mobile short message service (SMS), the CEO said. “The fastest growing sector in our county to use text messaging and mobile is 35 years old and above,” said Plank,

“and according to a Pew Foundation report, over 19 percent of all millennials made a mobile donation last year. Mobile is yet to have its big day, but it is growing by leaps and bounds,” he said.

Reflecting on the year it took the two organizations to put the partnership in place, Glenn said that the “key piece” in GuideStar’s decision to join forces with MobileCause was that the company understood the intricacies of giving and not just the ability to conduct outreach and collect funds.

MobileCause Chairman and CEO Plank said, “We knew that we wanted to partner with them because I’ve followed [GuideStar] and I know they are the best out there. I’m proud of the fact that over the course of the year we have become a trusted partner of theirs,” he said.

For more information

Lee Glenn is senior vice president at GuideStar USA. To learn more about GuideStar or the new partnership with MobileCause, visit www.guidestar.org. Douglas Plank is chairman and CEO of MobileCause Inc. To learn more about MobileCause and its services, go to www.mobilecause.com. ■

Research

Research study identifies a way to document hope for funders

Professor Chan M. Hellman at the Dept. of Human Relations, and director at the Center of Applied Research for Nonprofit Organizations at the University of Oklahoma, recently completed a study with The Parent Child Center (PCCT) in Tulsa, Oklahoma, that may assist nonprofit organizations in documenting for funders an elusive yet extremely powerful benefit of their programs—hope.

Hellman said that by transforming the language of their programs, nonprofits may be able to provide evidence-based data to foundations, donors and stakeholders regarding the impact that hope is having on their clients.

A psychologist by profession, Hellman became interested in the idea of hope three years ago, when he began reading about the positive psychology movement.

“I asked myself, ‘What if we studied what’s right with people as opposed to what’s wrong with

people?’” said Hellman. “What if we took human strengths that people have and used that to build upon areas they need help in? I thought, ‘This is the nonprofit community, but it is also evidence-based practice, or strength-based practice,’” he said.

Hope, said the professor, was originally defined and measured by University of Kansas Professor Rick (C.R.) Snyder, who said that everything that we do is goal-driven behavior—whether it’s to find a meal or to develop a relationship—all of our goals drive us to get what we desire.

“The question is: Do we have mental strategies—or pathways—to achieve the goals?” said Hellman. “And if we have the strategies or pathways, do we have the motivation or mental energy to stay with those goals in the presence of barriers? You have to have both the pathways and mental energy to have hope, and that’s what hope is when it’s measured,” he said.

In 2009, Hellman said he was invited to speak at a Tulsa-area United Way executive directors' meeting. In passing, he made a comment about the concept of hope to Desiree Doherty, executive director for PCCT, who responded that a concept like hope could not be measured, he said.

"Two weeks later she invited me to talk to all of her program managers, and I was eventually invited to do an agency-wide study to see how the organization interacts with hope," Hellman said. In order to do the study, the professor said, he and his graduate students had to compare hope to a 'gold standard' within the prevention of child abuse and neglect arena: parenting stress, a consistent predictor of child abuse.

What the study found stunned Hellman and the PCCT:

- Parenting stress is negatively related to well-being (the higher the stress, the lower the quality of life) but the study found that in the presence of effective program services (or pathways) the effects of parenting stress on the parent-child relationship dissolved, meaning that the negative affect of parenting stress dissipates through services offered, thus reducing the potential for child abuse and neglect, he said.

"That's a pretty significant finding for PCCT that they can show to funders," Hellman said.

- Program services can predict hope, both pathways and mental energy.

- When comparing high-hope clients to low-hope clients, in every case, high-hope parents did better.

Nowadays, all PCCT programs and staff members talk using the language of hope, said Hellman. And while these findings are exciting, how can data from an academic study translate into practical steps that nonprofits nationwide can put into use? Hellman said that the implications for organizations include:

- **Hope can be documented.** "We ought to embrace hope as a short-term outcome, because you have to embrace things like hope—a significant catalyst—before people will change their behaviors," said Hellman. Begin to think about the measurable impact of hope on your programs and how this data can influence foundations and other funders who want to know what their funding has accomplished.

"You'll be able to tell [the funders] hope may not break the cycle of poverty in one year or two years, but your organization is having an impact on the quality of life for your clients."

- **Hope can help fundraising efforts.** Fundraising is consistently identified as one of the most difficult jobs

for the executive director, the professor said. "What we're hoping to provide is a common language for organizations so that they can begin to articulate their programs in terms of pathways and mental energy as giving their clients hope," said Hellman. "That common language can enhance capacity to show a funder the investment. We're offering a common language with data to back it up."

- **Hope can promote advocacy.** "Imagine the child welfare system being able to go in to lawmakers and use a common language to collectively talk about the data-driven impact of hope, Hellman said. "Instead of a nebulous idea, there's science behind it: program services are predictive of hope, and hope is predictive of behavioral change."

- **Hope can decrease burnout in staffers.** Are people with higher levels of hope able to handle stressors and remain engaged far better than employees who have lower levels of hope? This kind of data can assist organizations in providing strategies or pathways to help employees reach their own goals, he said.

- **Hope can guide new nonprofit leaders.** A new executive director that grounds his decision-making consistently in hope—meaning he has strategies or pathways to achieve goals and the mental energy to pursue those goals—is more likely to be perceived as just.

- **Hope can connect employees across an organization.** A nonprofit may have a common mission but run 20 separate programs reaching for different outcomes. Gaining a common language helps the case manager know where she fits and how she is contributing to hope just like the licensed therapist or the front line staffer, the professor said.

"We've proven that hope can be measured," said Hellman, "and at the end of the day, the funder has given hope to clients, staff and stakeholders. To me, that's a pretty powerful message."

For more information

Chan M. Hellman is a professor for the Dept. of Human Relations and director at the Center of Applied Research for Nonprofit Organizations at the University of Oklahoma. To learn more, visit www.ou.edu/content/tulsa/carnpo.html. To read the complete study "The Impact of Program Service on the Parent-Child Interaction and Hope," visit www.ou.edu/content/tulsa/carnpo/Partners.html. The Parent Child Center of Tulsa works to prevent child abuse and neglect through education, treatment and advocacy. To learn more go to www.parentchildcenter.org/hope-research/. ■