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Nonprofit

Nonprofits use teen board programs as recruiting tool

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OKLAHOMA CITY – When Erin Page was in middle school and high school she volunteered at Infant Crisis Services as a member of the nonprofit's teen board.

“My volunteer experience included rocking babies and helping clients with diaper and formula packages,” Page said.

As an adult and director of communications and marketing for the Oklahoma Heritage Association, Page helped the nonprofit agency develop its own teen board fashioned after the Infant Crisis Services Teen Associate Board.

The Oklahoma Heritage Association Teen Board was created last year and in March sponsored a battle of the bands, raising \$15,000, Page said. A second battle of the bands is planned this March in the Oklahoma Heritage Association parking lot.

Money raised by the teen group was used for several Heritage Association programs, including paying fees for students to tour the association's museum and scholarships for a summer camp and book program.

The second teen board has 29 members from 18 different high schools across the state, Page said. The board is for students in grades nine through 12.

“They are on the board for a year and the students who are still eligible can reapply,” she said. “We need students who want to work hard and get involved with our mission and who are passionate about what we are doing.”

Other nonprofit groups also are recruiting teenage volunteers.

The Central Oklahoma Humane Society's teen board met for the first time Tuesday. The eight members are from schools around the Oklahoma City area, said Christy Counts, president and founder of the nonprofit pet adoption group started in January 2007.

“Education is a huge part of our mission,” Counts said. “We know we have to get the next generation on board with what we are trying to do with animal welfare.”

Board members are elected for a year. Each board will have a project. Board members will work as volunteers at the Central Oklahoma Humane Society's pet adoption center, which opened Oct. 14 at 7500 N. Western Ave.

The adoption center placed 50 dogs and cats in new adoptive homes during its first two weeks of operation, Counts said. Grand opening activities are scheduled Saturday and Sunday at the adoption center.

In addition to the teen board, the new adoption center includes space for a humane education program for children. The children's program will include book clubs, a children's Web site, interactive games and learning materials.

Counts has plans for the teen board to work with the children's program.

“I would like to see them do a lot of the teaching for the younger children,” Counts said.

Infant Crisis Services created its Teen Association Board in 2001. The nonprofit agency providing food, formula and diapers to needy babies and toddlers usually receives about 40 applications for the board, but this year 95 teens applied for the 35-person board.

“It's wonderful to see so many young people dedicated to continuing the momentum of our city by getting involved in such a hands-on way,” said Miki Farris, Infant Crisis Services executive director.

“Being part of a board takes time, and it is a commitment, and more and more teens are showing they

are capable of making that commitment.”

Last year, the Teen Associate Board raised more than \$45,000 with a dinner and silent auction. The teens were responsible for the entire event, including soliciting sponsorships and auction and event planning and publicity.

“The teens also bring a fresh, new perspective,” said Farris. “They have a different way of looking at things and bring an energy that is inspiring to our adult board and staff. Even their way of communicating has prompted us to start a Facebook and MySpace page.”

Chandler Baird, a junior at Heritage Hall, joined the Infant Crisis Services Teen Associate Board after seeing how much her older sister enjoyed the board.

“My sister was on the Infant Crisis Services teen board for four years and she would share amazing stories about the people she met and helped,” Baird said. “Her stories encouraged me to volunteer at Infant Crisis Services.”

Baird said she has learned about the community through her volunteer work with the board.

“I’ve been able to put my ideas into action and work in a group toward something that is bigger than myself,” she said.

Page said working with the Infant Crisis Services Teen Associate Board provided motivation to join the nonprofit sector as an adult.

“It instilled in me the importance of giving back to the community,” she said. “My experience with Infant Crisis Services is what helped me know that I wanted to work in the nonprofit sector as a career.”

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