

UW-Stevens Point PRSSA

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Marketing and Public Relations in Stevens Point Non-Profit Organizations

I had the fortunate opportunity to interview four representatives of non-profits in our community. I spoke with Layne Cozzolino, from Central Rivers Farmshed, Greg Wright from Create Portage County, Mikayla Kleifgen from Portage County Boys and Girls Club, and Lindsey Nelson from Woodlands Church. Each of these organizations have unique missions but share similar qualities and ways of operations.

Overall, all non-profits, also called “not-for-profits”, are described this way because the revenue generated isn’t for the profit of the organization, it goes directly into programs and operational costs. Non-profits have specific missions and values that need to be prevalent in every decision. Since all the money goes back into operations, resources are limited and people who work in non-profit take on many tasks.

Here’s what the professionals have to say about non-profit marketing and public relations:

Have you worked for For-Profit PR in the Past? If so, what is the biggest difference between for-profit and non-profit PR?

All: Two of the professionals interviewed had worked in for-profit businesses in the past, though the two that hadn’t still understood the differences. Everyone mentioned the limited resources in non-profit. Most of the revenue comes

from donors and grants, that expect the money to apply directly to the programs, so fitting in an advertising budget has to be creative and adaptive.

Platforms like “Canva” and “Dreamhost” are free to use for non-profits. Canva is a program that assists in graphic designs, and Dreamhost is a website platform. Alongside these, it is crucial to use social media to its fullest potential. Three of the individuals have boosted posts on Facebook to promote events, but all of them regularly update social media and when there is an event, encourage sponsors and supporters to share and organically promote the event.

What do you find is the easiest and most efficient ways to get the word out about an event?

All: There are the traditional means of communication; TV, radio, newspaper, but they can get expensive. Again, social media is great to use to advertise and having supporters share it boosts the event. Third Party Credibility is an important thing to have in any business, but personal experiences can advertise non-profit businesses in a free and personal way.

Wright: Stevens Point is a great “word of mouth” community. We have been working on creating brand ambassadors in our city that could share experiences they’ve had with our organization. These personal relationships create a lot more impact.

How many people (if any) do you work with?

Cozzolino: I am the only full-time staff member, and there are three other part-time staff and one AmeriCorps member. The rest of work is done by volunteers. In 2018, 431 volunteers logged 6425 hours which is roughly \$100K amount of work.

Wright: There is a two-person paid staff (currently only one position is filled), a 10-person board, 150 main volunteers, and 3000 others who work with the organization.

Kleifgen: I work with my boss and also work a lot with the executive director. There are also four interns.

Nelson: There is one part time graphic designer, one paid video intern, volunteers, and interns.

How does organization values play a role in your job/the work you do?

Wright: Values are the central core, non-profits exist entirely because of values. They effect investments and everything you do. Resources are limited so you need to decide what will make the biggest impact with the least amount of resources, and having values helps make that decision.

Kleifgen: Our values need to be relayed through our social media voice. When working non-profit, you need to love the values and the mission. Fundraising needs to focus on them and you need to target people who care about you values as well.

What is the most important aspect of your job (in your own opinion)/brings you joy/most interesting?

Cozzolino: The support between people and creating networks between people in our community. Also, the pride in the community and relationships built. These relationships are between people ages 10 to 100, and they aren't just financial relations, but neighborly, human relationships. Personalized food leads to caring about each other and supporting each other. It is hard to not buy food locally when you know the people making that food personally.

Kleifgen: I've been working on videos to post on our social media and seeing the impact on kids and hearing their stories shows it is all worth it, and it's great to see the benefits our programs have.

Lindsey: Getting to see the mission impact people, the impact from fundraising, and overall empowerment of people! Our story and mission aren't to have Woodlands succeed as an organization, but to enhance the community and impact others. Seeing others accomplish their goals is our success too.

If you do grant writing, how many do you write in a year and would that be something important to learn in school?

Cozzolino: Apply for 2-3 big ones each year, and then between 5-10 little ones. It would be very useful to learn to write grants.

Wright: Try to apply for about 1 a month. This amount grows each year. There's always value in educational training but the opportunity to do so isn't always there.

Take advantage of education you can get because with nonprofit work you could be expected to do a wide range of things.

Does your organization offer internships?

Cozzolino: Farmshed offers interns in the following areas: Communication, Events, Growing Collective (who works with Volunteer Coordinator), Graphic Design (works on Farm Fresh Atlas)

Wright: Currently we have Video Production, Event, and Economics interns. But really, we can fit an internship to whatever a student wants to dig deeper in.

Kleifgen: We have 2 PR and Marketing, one Graphic Design, and one Web Design

Nelson: We have Video, Student Ministries, and Communication internships.

Final Thoughts/tips/advice/comments:

Cozzolino: Diversify your experiences, don't stick to one path your entire life, and try new things to make you a well-rounded person and employee.

Wright: Nonprofit and community work is always having a bucket of ideas and a handful of resources and trying to help the community with the resources but always having to keep the other ideas in mind for the future and for when the opportunity comes along to do it.

Kleifgen: Love what you do, especially in non-profit, find something you're passionate about supporting and going to work will be so rewarding.

Nelson: There is still money in nonprofit work. Not 6-figure salaries, but you also won't be broke. You just need to find an organization you are passionate about because without that passion you won't succeed in this world.

Molly Andreae

Sophomore

Arts Management Major

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