

SOUTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT CULTURAL COALITION

**Rising Tide Series - Cultural Summit- Inspiring Leadership
July 18, 2016 at Groton Public Library, Groton**

SUMMARY

This event featured two panel discussions – the first, an introduction to board service for young, emerging leaders, and the second, best practices for experienced board members. In between the two panels, nonprofit organizations hosted information tables for attendees to learn more about board service and vice versa.

Panel 1:

Chris Soto, Higher Edge

Kia Baird, Kia B Music

Keith Turner, McCue Mortgage Company

Panel 2:

Capt. Andrea Marcille, USCG (Ret.), Coast Guard Alumni Assoc.

Lisa McGinley, Southeastern CT Cultural Coalition

Bob Mills, Norwich Community Development Corporation

Gary Lakowsky, Smith-Harris House Commission

Nonprofit Organizations Match-up Session:

Connecticut Storytelling Center

Groton Public Library

Interdistrict School for Arts and Communication (ISAAC School)

Mystic & Noank Library

Norwich Arts Center

Reliance House Inc.

Young Professionals of Eastern CT

Attendance:

43 people attended representing 36 organizations and businesses

Discussion topics, highlights and notable areas of interest:

- The young leaders panel described how mentors and positive board experiences helped instill an interest in pursuing board service. The panel shared the following insights:
 1. On a personal/professional level, board service provides the ability to network, meet peers with diverse backgrounds, give back to community, and provides experience in problem solving.
 2. While serving on Boards, the board receives broad perspective from their interaction within the community, a youth perspective and energy, passion for the cause.
- Resources for finding emerging leaders include: YP of Eastern Chamber, Rotary/Rotaract, Spark Makerspace, Community Foundation, Hispanic Alliance, and Pfizer/EB Engineering Council.

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- The experienced Board member panel shared that they feel most engaged when their Board service experience includes the opportunity to feel effective, meet a need, and connect with the mission or organization goals. Other best practices included:
 1. When recruiting new board members, it is important to have them attend a meeting to determine if a fit, ask for leadership recommendations from board members and the community, and know what the organization needs and reach out.
 2. Once on the Board, board members appreciate that their time is respected, meetings are enjoyable and end on time, people know their role and how their contributions are making an impact. Engagement in between meetings is often helpful for comfort level in the Board meetings. Regular Board assessment is recommended.
 3. Boards are policy making entities and should hold themselves to the roles and responsibilities as outlined in the bylaws. Boards should be mission focused, getting back to basics of why they were formed and keep within those guidelines.
- There may be an opportunity for additional areas of training on this topic, perhaps a region-wide Board orientation.
- The Match-up session was useful in bringing together groups that otherwise would not have opportunity to meet each other. The interaction with the organizations was not timed and attendees were allowed to dialog informally. More attendees or hosts would require a more formal match-up process.

Outcomes:

- Follow-up materials included: nonprofit website links BlueAvocado and nonprofit Quarterly, sample Board recruitment worksheet, Board member commitment and responsibilities, meeting evaluation form and Board Assessment Chart.
- There is an opportunity to plan similar events (perhaps twice per year). Greater benefit would be achieved by partnering with other groups to recruit attendees and presenting organizations, such as Community Foundation and Eastern Chamber of Commerce.