

ANNUAL REPORT

FOUNDING PERIOD

March 2016 through June 2017

OUR FOUNDING STORY

In June 2017, the Charles County Charitable Trust celebrated its first anniversary. To mark the event, we held a big Open House including a ribbon-cutting ceremony with congratulatory presentations by local and state elected officials.

Our founding year—2016—tells a story of aspiration, planning, and hard work that depended for its success on an unusual combination of local government action and community response.

In January 2016, the County Commissioners voted unanimously to transfer the management of its annual grant awards program to an independent nonprofit organization. The County would retain its commitment to providing grant funds every year but administration would be outsourced.

It proved necessary to create such an independent nonprofit. With guidance from a consultant with extensive nonprofit experience, a volunteer committee was soon organized. The committee held its first meeting in March and immediately plunged into work on two fronts: handling the grant program for the coming year and establishing the planned organization.

By June, the committee was ready to announce awards to twenty-one nonprofits, totaling \$783,100. Meanwhile, its members agreed on the mission of the planned new organization. It would encompass both responsibility for grant-making and a commitment to improving the quality of life in the county by supporting the healthy development of the community's nonprofit organizations.

The committee named the new organization the Charles County Charitable Trust. In June 2016 the State of Maryland approved the Trust's Articles of Incorporation.

The first Board meeting took place in August. The seven Directors adopted bylaws, a code of ethics, and conflict of interest and fiscal management policies. They also approved the budget, elected officers, worked out the staggering of Board terms, and hired the executive director. Most of the Board was made up of persons who had served on the organizing committee.

BUILDING FROM THE FOUNDATION UP

The period from August 2016 through June 2017 was marked by a vigorous effort to put all the necessary functions and programs in place.

Administration and Finances

To gear up for the work to be done, we set up office operations at 9375 Chesapeake Street in La Plata. The executive director hired staff, starting with an office manager and then a part-time program director. Provided with a first-year budget of \$176,300 by the County, we opened an account with a local bank and arranged for accounting services with a local CPA firm. The Board regularly reviewed and discussed financial reports. The year ended with a modest surplus of operating funds (\$12,668.03), which was reimbursed to the County.

Charitable Status

On April 9 we received from IRS the letter recognizing the Trust as a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt charitable organization, retroactive to the date of incorporation in June 2016.

Governance

Through the process of monthly meetings, the Board strengthened its teamwork, maintained oversight of the Trust's finances and administrative work, and approved key documents, including a memorandum of understanding with the County in connection with the nonprofit grant awards program.

Programs

We gave priority attention to the development and execution of several innovative programs in line with our mission.

(1) Nonprofit Grant Awards Program. In the first year, management of the annual grant cycle was split between the committee to form the Trust and the County. The committee determined the grant awards, and the County maintained the implementation phase, which involved monitoring uses of the grant funds by the recipient organizations.

When the grant cycle for Fiscal Year 2018 opened, the Trust was prepared take on management of the program in its entirety. The Board approved a new grant application, set April 2, 2017, as the submission deadline, and took extensive steps to advertise the program's opening. Convening as the grant panel, the Board approved 24 awards totaling \$783,100, the same amount distributed the preceding year. Before the fiscal year closed on June 30, Grant Agreements were ready to mail out to the awardees for their review and signature.

(2) Nonprofit Economic and Social Impact Study. To gain a reliable picture of the county's diverse nonprofit sector we undertook this first-ever study in partnership with Maryland Nonprofits. The Charles County Economic Development Department also contributed to the project. A team of volunteers representative of the local nonprofit community provided input to the design of the survey and to the evaluation of the data. The findings are a source of ongoing valuable information about the needs and challenges of the nonprofit community, as well as its manifold contributions to the county's economic health and cultural richness.

(3) Presidents' Council. As leaders of their organizations, presidents and board chairpersons serve a demanding volunteer role. Besides conducting board meetings, they guide their boards in planning and decision-making, assuring compliance with regulations, protecting fiscal integrity, and raising funds. They also serve as the organization's most visible spokesperson. To give these leaders the opportunity to network with each other and discuss common interests, we established a first Presidents' Council.

(4) Pro Bono Services. The Trust announced a plan to promote pro bono services for the local nonprofit community. Organizations in need of help in such areas as strategic planning, financial management, marketing, or technology will have the opportunity to be matched up with private sector entities qualified to provide it. For local business firms, it provides a meaningful way to demonstrate commitment to community life. For nonprofits, it means access to professional services that for budget reasons could not be afforded.

(5) Partnerships. We have carried out a strong commitment to building partnerships with other groups that support the work of the nonprofit sector.

- Formed the Nonprofit Leadership Colloquium and host its quarterly meetings.
- Served as a sponsor of the Nonprofit Institute's annual conference in May.
- Joined Maryland Nonprofits, attended its annual conference, and developed a partnership with it for the Nonprofit Economic and Social Impact Study.
- Took part in the meetings of the local Service and Advocacy Council.
- Co-sponsored an annual grant seminar with the Charles County Public Library, the Nonprofit Institute, County government, the Charles County Public Schools, and the Tri-County Council of Southern Maryland.

OUTREACH

Setting up our website came first and was followed with introducing social media through Facebook and Twitter accounts. We assigned high priority to developing a comprehensive contact list allowing us to communicate with the county's scores of nonprofit organizations.

GRANT AWARDS

The list of awards given for Fiscal Years 2017 and 2018 was posted on the website – www.charlesnonprofits.org – and will remain there.

FOUNDING BOARD & OFFICERS

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