

Nonprofits Stress Coordinating Efforts

By C.J. Lin Staff Writer

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Facing dwindling funds as demand for services grows, nonprofit organizations must prioritize their goals while communities should pitch in to help the less fortunate, activists said Wednesday.

The chief concern among 200 representatives of about 40 Los Angeles nonprofits gathered at an anti-poverty conference remained the same after years of a struggling economy: How do we do more with less?

The key to weathering it out is to share ideas as well as resources, said Florence Green, co-chair of the fourth annual MEND conference titled "Two Checks or Two Grants Away from Poverty."

Not all groups might have a conference room, a receptionist or professional fundraiser, but these are resources that can be volunteered by the community or shared among agencies, Green said.

"We should not go gently into that good night," said Green, the vice president of IdeaEncore Network, an online hub for nonprofits to share information. If you don't serve an issue, it gets pushed into police, it gets pushed into emergency health care, it gets pushed into something else that's more costly than if we just serve it in the first place."

At Meet Each Need with Dignity, the Pacoima-based nonprofit that serves 32,000 clients each month, organizers have relied on a growing number of volunteers. Nearly 1,500 new volunteers pitched in last year, lending a hand to provide education, food, medical care and job training to impoverished residents of the San Fernando Valley. MEND has also ramped up fundraising efforts, said Marianne Haver Hill, president and CEO of MEND.

"There's a lot of hard-working people that have lost their jobs, and in many cases, they've lost their homes," Hill said. "They desperately want to work, but there are no jobs out there. We need to stand with them, reach out to them, help them, in this time of need."

Tough financial times also give people who might not otherwise donate time or money the opportunity to do exactly that - even if they think they might not be able to connect with another social group or think they lack teachable skills, community activists said.

"Kinship is recession-proof," said Father Greg Boyle, founder and CEO of Homeboy Industries, which trains and employs reformed gang members. "We're in this together."

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