

# Lighting the Way

BY NICHOLE LIVENGOOD

## DNA Creative Communications Shines the Light on Local Nonprofits

**D**NA Creative Communications wrapped up their “Shining the Light on Your Nonprofit” series on November 11th at the University Center of Greenville with “Re-Energizing Your Event Planning.” Around 100 representatives from area nonprofits attended the last of the six part series.

Workshop panelists for the workshop included nonprofit leaders Julia Forster (Spoleto Festival USA) and Bill Soroachak (Ronald McDonald House Charities of the Carolinas), as well as corporate representatives Herb Johnson (Michelin North America), Anna Locke (A.T. LOCKE), and Robyn Zimmerman (Greenville Hospital System). Participants, which varied from small, novice nonprofits to larger more established outfits, were given insight into what it takes to shine above the rest when it comes to seeking sponsorship and how to keep their fundraising events fresh and focused.

The Community Foundation of Greenville, *Greenville Business Magazine*, Martin Printing, AT LOCKE, Greenville Forward and the University Center of Greenville sponsored the Shine the Light series, which focused on giving Upstate nonprofits the tools they need step up their overall marketing and communications efforts. Participants not only walked away from each workshop with a notebook full of information to help them carry their nonprofits forward, they took on specific goals such as working to build a Facebook community, or developing a closer

relationship with the local media which could provide immediate results for their organization.

DNACC’s “LIVE HERE GIVE HERE” Program which was launched in 2009 inspired the series, says Debbie Nelson, founder of DNA Creative.

“Rather than do one small pro bono project for several organizations throughout the year, the DNA team decided to strategically partner with one organization for the whole year,” says Nelson. Her company specializes in advertising, branding, e-communications, public relations and special events services for government agencies, educational and financial institutions, medical practices, homebuilders and nonprofits.

Through an application process, the Public Education Partners Greenville County, formerly Alliance for Quality Education, was chosen as their 2010 LIVE HERE GIVE HERE partner. The nonprofit is the only local, independent organization dedicated solely to the goal of improving public education in Greenville County. “DNACC has taken us through the process of rebranding in a very methodical yet creative way,” says



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Pat McClintock, Development Manager for Public Education Partners. DNA coached organization staff on social media strategy and created key pieces of marketing including brochures, event invitations, donor pieces and e-blasts so that they could better communicate their mission and message to the community, and further strengthen their relationship with sponsors.

“Their team pushed us a little when necessary but always listened to our concerns about maintaining our mission and vision to strengthen public education in Greenville County. DNACC showed us the need for a strong social media presence and how important it is to keep it fresh and updated,” says McClintock.

Forty area nonprofits applied for or were nominated for LIVE HERE GIVE HERE in 2010, but only one could be chosen, says Nelson. That left thirty-something nonprofits who needed help, so the DNA team partnered with The Community Foundation of Greenville to develop “Shine the Light on Your Nonprofit,” a series of six sessions based on the needs they saw in the LIVE HERE GIVE HERE applications. Because of the series of workshops, DNA was able to help over 180 nonprofits this year with their communications strategy.

Session topics included: Ignite Your Marketing Imagination: A Speed Dating Approach to Marketing; Moving At



Non-profit attendees at the 6th event in the series. Photo provided by DNA

the Speed of Light: A Social Media Workshop; Finding the Spotlight: Media Panel for Public Relations Strategies; Be A Beacon For Your Brand featuring Deb Sofield; and Be a Social-Light for Your Organization: Social Media Advocacy for Board Members.

“With the ever-increasing number of nonprofits, it is critically important to get your message heard,” says McClintock, whose organization also participated in this year’s “Shine the Light on Your Nonprofit” Series. “The workshops provided us with tools to better market and manage our business, and the speakers were valuable in educating us on improving all areas of our organization, from marketing to board relations to event planning.”

Public Education Partners staff will be able to use these tools to increase their base of support for years to come.

“Debbie Nelson and her team did an excellent job of providing participating nonprofits with the tools they will need to equip themselves for the changing future of nonprofits,” says Bob Morris, President of the Community Foundation. He says he was surprised how incredibly well received the series was by local nonprofits, and glad there was such an amazing turnout.

The Community Foundation has already signed on for next year’s series of workshops, for which Nelson says planning is well underway. **GBM**

