

# In Their Own Words... Beth Dahle

Anne Saporito 09 June 2011

Beth Dahle, co-President of the Philadelphia chapter of Impact100, is a passionate leader for charitable initiatives in Philadelphia and has volunteered extensively over the course of her career as a grantwriter and fundraiser. We spoke with Ms. Dahle to learn more about Impact100 and its unique model.

**Anne Saporito, MPH, CPH, is a Philadelphia Social Innovations Journal Founding Contributor.**

What is Impact100?

Impact100 is an all-volunteer philanthropic organization that disburses to the community every dollar that comes in through a collective giving model. The goal is to provide high-impact grants that reach under-served populations, raise the profile of deserving but lesser known organizations, and highlight unmet needs in the region. Impact100 members are women who each contribute a minimum of \$1,000 annually and pool their contributions to make large grants in June to nonprofit organizations that they collectively choose. This model comes from the original Impact100 group in Cincinnati, and at least 15 Impact groups have now been established

across the country.

How did Impact100 start in Philadelphia?

I heard about Cincinnati's Impact100 through a friend and thought that Philadelphia could and should be doing the same thing. My co-founder, Mary Broach, has a background similar to mine—she had worked in banking and volunteered in the nonprofit sector for a long time. Together we felt we could make this happen, and we tested the waters by sending a letter to about 300 people throughout our personal and professional networks. It took about a week to hear from someone, but more responses followed. . . .

How did you build your infrastructure?

In the spring of 2008, Mary and I started by writing job descriptions for the Board and recruited nine members. Through networking and outreach, our membership grew to 111 that first year, and now our annual cycle starts with building membership from September to December, with members needing to donate by December 1 in order to participate in the coming year's grantmaking. January to June is our period of reviewing grants, and in June we hold an annual meeting where five finalists present their proposals in person to our entire membership.

How do you approach grantmaking?

We have five areas of focus for grant awards: Arts & Culture; Education; Environment; Family; Health & Wellness. Our annual meeting features one finalist

from each focus area, and in June 2011, with donations from 164 members, we will be thrilled to award our largest grants to date, totaling \$164,000: a project grant of \$100,000; two operating grants of \$20,000; and two operating grants of \$12,

000.

Our

goal

is to provide high-impact grants that reach underserved populations, raise the profile of deserving but lesser known organizations, and highlight unmet needs in the region. Each fall we host a grant applicant workshop for interested applicants and we conduct training sessions for all members interested in proposal review and evaluation. We regularly solicit feedback and administer surveys periodically so that we can constantly improve our process.

Do you feel that the "women only" composition plays a significant role in your grantmaking?

As we learned from a recent speaker, Donna Hall of Women Donors Network, men and women approach philanthropic decisions differently. Women tend to like collaboration, and Impact's collective giving model and proposal evaluation process encourages broad discussion and consideration from a number of perspectives.

In November, you and Mary were awarded the New Generation Philanthropist of the Year award. How have

you managed to be so successful?

By our third annual meeting this June, we will have awarded nine grants totaling \$414,000, which feels amazing, but something else we're very proud of is our loyal community of members. One of the biggest testaments to our success is Impact100's 80 percent membership retention rate. One really nice element of Impact100 is that any member interested in taking a leadership role is encouraged to do so. Our model of engaging donors and leveraging their contributions results in a bigger impact than we could have as individuals. Through this model of collective giving, we hope to continue to support the good works of the nonprofits in our region.

How does Impact100 ensure a strong organizational future?

For us, the most effective way to grow membership is word of mouth, and we encourage members to bring a friend to our events. In addition to the grantmaking, we aim to educate our members. Interested members participate in proposal review and evaluation, and learn about the meaningful work conducted by nonprofits in the region. They can attend presentations such as programs about demystifying financial statements, the art of grantmaking, and the ways women and men differ in their philanthropy. Recent speakers were Joan McConnon from Project H.O.M.E. and Laura Otten, Director of The Nonprofit Center at LaSalle University. Teaching our members

to be informed givers—for their own personal giving beyond Impact100—is the sort of thing that really makes a difference in how people feel about being part of a special organization like this one.