

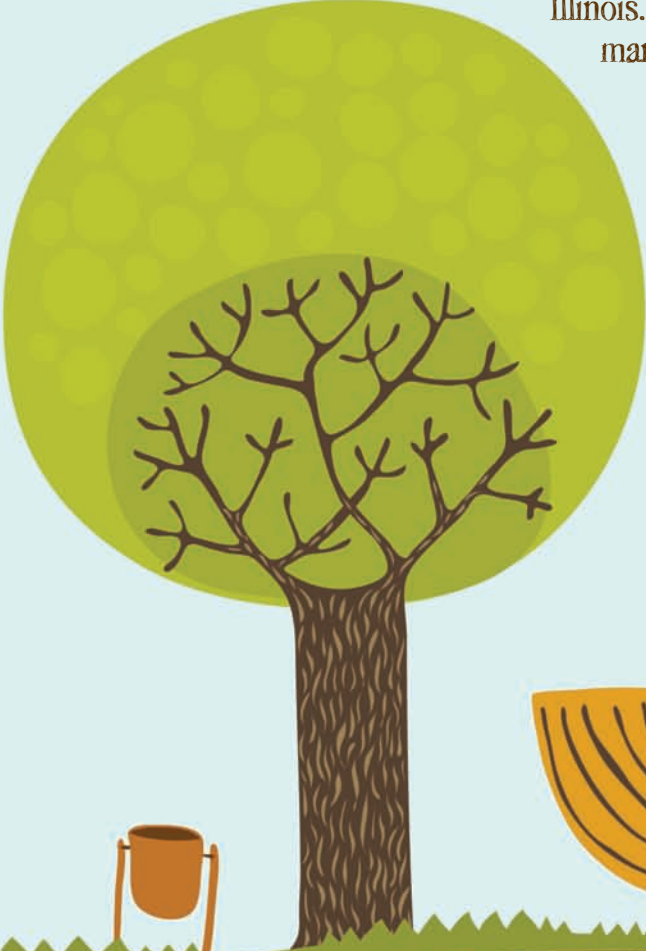




Sowing the Seeds of Nonprofit

Around the turn of the 18th century, John Chapman, a.k.a., Johnny Appleseed, left his Massachusetts home and headed west out into the vast American wilderness. Always barefoot, dressed in rags and donning a metal pot for a hat, this pioneer and early conservationist wandered throughout the Midwest planting apple trees from Pennsylvania to Illinois. To those who knew him, Appleseed was a generous, selfless man who found great satisfaction in helping others.



Peggy Outon is the Johnny Appleseed of nonprofit management support – minus the metal pot hat and rags. Since 1987, she has been spreading the seeds of nonprofit management throughout the country, from Austin to New Orleans to Pittsburgh and beyond. She’s even founded three nonprofit management organizations during her career, including the Bayer Center for Nonprofit Management at Robert Morris University, where she serves as executive director.

Founded in 1999, the Bayer Center for Nonprofit Management provides the necessary tools for nonprofit organizations to effectively manage and compete in today’s society. Based in downtown Pittsburgh, the Bayer Center works with nonprofits to assure that the money they receive from both public and private sources is efficiently and effectively spent in order to advance their charitable mission.

it Success

The Bayer Center offers consulting services in many areas including board development, business planning, collaboration and alliances, financial management, fund development, organizational effectiveness and technology planning. It also offers workshops on such topics as collaboration, technology, innovative financing, human resources and marketing. The center provides information and referral services, conducts applied research and convenes in-depth discussions on the societal problems addressed by nonprofit organizations. Furthermore, it works to build mutually beneficial partnerships rather than conventional donor-recipient connections.

In addition, the Bayer Center staff members teach some of the classes in RMU's M.S. in Nonprofit Management Program, which is offered by the School of Business. Students in the program study finance, accounting and human resource management, as well as nonprofit-specific topics like organizational culture, legal issues and fundraising. The Bayer Center staff adds the seasoned practitioner's point of view to the program.

The Bayer Center was initiated by a gift from the Richard King Mellon Foundation to RMU to ensure that nonprofits had access to good practice, tools, information, education and research, and that they understood how to be well managed. Scott D. Izzo, director of the foundation, was there when the idea for the Bayer Center came about. "The Bayer Center provides value by offering an array of programs, best practices and a variety of services at a relatively large



Peggy Outon



Washington County Habitat for Humanity

Laura Karl Vincenti, Executive Director

We had some organizational issues and realized that we needed an outside perspective. Representatives from our board of directors and I met with Peggy Outon to talk about our areas of concern and what services the Bayer Center for Nonprofit Management would be able to provide. It was a big decision for our small organization to invest in a consultant, and we discussed it over several board meetings. Peggy talked with our board, discussed the proposed contract and answered our questions. It became crystal clear that not only was engaging the Bayer Center something that would be smart to do, it was something we had to do to help us become the well-run organization we strive to be.

Nonprofit organizations are doing vital work and rely on the members of their communities to help by providing funding and volunteer service. The people who give so generously of their time and money demand and deserve the organizations they support be well-run, organized, ethical and good stewards of the money and talent entrusted to them. The Bayer Center helps nonprofits be all those things.

Aside from never having enough money, I believe the biggest challenge facing nonprofits, especially small organizations, is appropriately educating and utilizing their board of directors, who are legally and fiscally liable for the organization. They are key to developing the vision of the organization and leading it into the future. Too often, however, they are not properly trained as to their duties and responsibilities. Also, since staff is not always adept at tapping the talents of the individual board members or at sharing information, board members can feel disconnected, which is just as bad.

The Bayer Center has helped our board members embrace their roles as advisors, mentors and chief fundraisers. In turn, our staff has learned how to better utilize the members' talents and expertise and how to keep the members appropriately informed and engaged.

Thanks to the Bayer Center, we are working much better together as a team to provide the highest and best service we can, and to reach even greater levels of service in years to come.



Girl Scouts Western Pennsylvania

Patricia A. Burkart, Chief Executive Officer

When we decided to merge the five Girl Scout Councils in Western Pennsylvania, we looked for a consultant to help support our work through the realignment process. We had worked with the Bayer Center for Nonprofit Management before, regarding training for our board members, and so we ended up choosing them as our consultant through our 18-month realignment process. The Bayer Center made comments and recommendations that helped us move along the process.

The members of our Council Realignment Committee knew how to move the Girl Scout Councils forward, in general, but Scott Leff helped direct us with regard to legal considerations and encouraged us to bring in legal council when we needed it. He was also instrumental in guiding us through training of our board members and staff. Scott listened intently to everything we discussed. He was very considerate and gave us an objective perspective, making recommendations for other considerations as needed. We relied upon him to jump in when we were struggling with the proper direction to take. His experience and knowledge regarding the merger process was a tremendous asset as a member of our team.

One of the biggest challenges we faced was helping the members and volunteers of our organization feel good about and support our merger. Scott Leff and Yvonne Von Haitsma worked with us to prepare an extremely beneficial training program for our board members and staff. This really set us off on the right foot and helped everyone feel supportive of our merger.

Another challenge was understanding what was required during the merger process. Scott attended our meetings and guided us on those key parts of the process. We really needed that additional level of merger expertise that Scott brought to the discussion. He was our merger compass. He guided us when we were heading off track.

The staff members from the Bayer Center are absolutely invaluable to this community. They provided a breadth of knowledge that was imperative to our success.

scale,” says Izzo. “It has truly been a wonderful addition to the region.” Izzo, along with Jim Denova of the Benedum Foundation, and **Edward A. Nicholson**, past president of RMU, served as the impetus for the center back in 1999.

“It took a few meetings for the concept to evolve,” says Izzo. “We then formed a community committee of several funders and community group leaders, and shaped a job description for the executive director position. Peggy, with her national and regional background in nonprofit technical support work, emerged as the strongest candidate.”

The Bayer Center spends enough time to know each client well and be able to help them effectively, whether that takes a few months or as long as a year or more. The center works with clients as large as Pressley Ridge, a storied, international organization for troubled youth; and as new and growing as the Good Grief Center, a bereavement support organization.

“We are market-driven,” says Outon. “We don’t really have an average client. If someone calls us and asks us for assistance, our job is to help them.”

The Bayer Center offers training in fundraising, finance and technology, and tries to remain current in each area. They listen to what their clients are talking about and, in response, try to craft programs around their needs. “We offer summer camps and executive breakfasts,” says Outon. “We do a variety of things.

In fact, we are the only place in our region that offers workshops year-round.”

“We are attempting and

A Growing Demand

Nonprofits are, to a great degree, a phenomenon of the past 35 to 40 years. The explosion of the nonprofit industry can be traced to the early 1980s and the redefinition of the role of government in the lives of its citizens. As government has gotten smaller, services it once provided are now being delivered by nonprofits. What's more, the amount of money flowing through nonprofits has grown exponentially. Southwestern Pennsylvania alone has at around 6,000 nonprofits.

"Society's need for the nonprofit solution is urgent," says Outon.

The Bayer Center serves a 10-county region, bridging the sectors between government and business, and providing things that are essential for quality of life. It brings people's talent and time into nonprofits through volunteerism and board service as well as through professional staff.

As the nonprofit market grows, it's clear that there is much work to be done. Fortunately, resources are becoming available to pay for that work. Many colleges and universities are recognizing the need and are offering courses in nonprofit management.

"We're certainly in a very competitive marketplace," says Outon. "Being affiliated with RMU gives us a distinctiveness. The way in which we've organized ourselves gives us a lot of opportunities."

As the market grows, the Bayer Center is looking to be an even more comprehensive resource. It has extensive consulting services and offers educational programming on approximately 100 topics a year through its non-credit class offerings. It also conducts vital research including a wage and benefit survey commissioned by the United Way, which documents in great detail the employment practice of nonprofits locally. In addition, the center charts the use of technology by nonprofits and does a biannual survey of connectivity, application, board engagement and technology use.

Few other nonprofit management organizations are as far-reaching as the Bayer Center, and few have such a knowledgeable staff. Nicholson, who writes and teaches in the center's nonprofit management program, recognizes the center's importance to the nonprofit community.

"The mission of the center is still vital," says Nicholson. "Many nonprofit organizations still need to adopt better management practices to serve their clients effectively. We're here to help them do just that."

Other staff members include **Scott Leff**, associate director; **Michelle David**, consulting assistant; **Jeff Forster**, director of technology services and research; **Cindy Leonard**, technology services analyst; **Carrie Richards**, marketing manager; and **Carrie Bennett**, staff consultant and researcher.

In addition to its nine full-time workers, the Bayer Center boasts a large team of volunteers from the Executive Service Corps, many of whom are retired executives from Alcoa, Westinghouse, PPG, Highmark and other respected local corporations. These knowledgeable volunteers work with mostly smaller nonprofits on executive coaching, strategic planning and facilities management. The center also collaborates with approximately 60 attorneys in their Law Links program, a service that provides pro bono legal services and clinics where nonprofits can get basic legal consulting for a nominal fee.

"The main strength of our team is its diversity," says Outon. "No one at the Bayer Center has the same background. They all come at the nonprofit world from a different place. But they all work well together."

Sowing the Seeds

Contrary to popular belief, Johnny Appleseed didn't just randomly scatter apple seeds over the landscape. In reality, he planted nurseries, built fences around them and returned every year or two to tend to them, nurture them and help them grow.

succeeding as a comprehensive resource for nonprofit organizations."



Bayer Center Staff



Peggy Outon

As director of the Bayer Center, Outon does the same thing with nonprofits. She helps them plant their seed, so to speak, and then gives them the tools and knowledge they need to grow and thrive. Of course, all this comes naturally to Outon, who's made a career out of working with nonprofits.

Born in Fort Worth, Texas, and raised in Dallas, Outon attended Sweet Briar College in Virginia for two years before earning degrees in drama and government from the University of Texas at Austin. She started her career at the Laguna Gloria Art Museum in Austin as a fundraiser, working in community management. Ten years later, she moved to New Orleans to be the director of development for the city's contemporary arts center. While there, she helped build the Ogden Museum of Southern Art at the University of New Orleans, and she started a nonprofit center as well.

Outon is a pioneer of the nonprofit movement, and her career reaches back to the beginnings of nonprofit management as a discipline.

She has served as a management consultant to more than 600 nonprofit organizations in fund development, board development, strategic and operational planning, and volunteer management. As a volunteer, she has served on 34 boards – seven as president – including chairing the founding board of the Alliance for Nonprofit Management, a national network of nonprofit capacity builders.

Outon started teaching nonprofit management at the graduate level at the University of New Orleans in 1993. Back then, the field was new and resources were scarce. "I had to go to New York City to find books on the subject," she says. "Now there are nonprofit management books available online and in bookstores everywhere."

Since then, the nonprofit industry has grown dramatically, creating a great need for the kind of services the Bayer Center provides. "The stakes have gone up exponentially," says Outon. "If you look at nonprofit study programs, you'll find that most of them, the earliest ones, are about 25 to 30 years old. This is a pretty young industry. Using evidence to guide decisions is relatively new for nonprofits."

Outon believes very strongly in the people who choose to work in nonprofits. "We are enormously served by their idealism, their ambition for our communities to thrive and their generosity to us all to try to see that the child gets the vaccine or that the elderly person has a place to live," she



"I think the Bayer Center for Nonprofit Management is a great resource for all the nonprofits in Pittsburgh because they provide valuable resources and support."

says. "They're brave and I respect them. If you believe in interconnection, which I absolutely do, we are all so much safer, happier and stronger because of the people who work at nonprofit organizations.

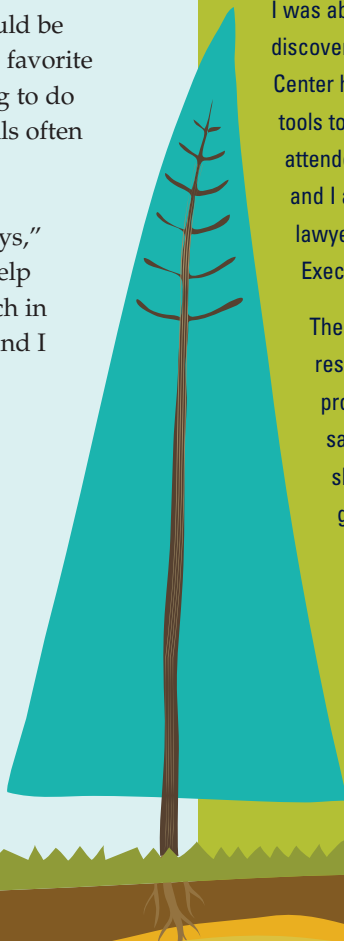
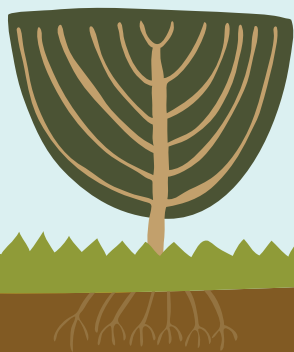
"I always say that nonprofits build strong communities. We (the Bayer Center) build strong nonprofits. I have been a nonprofit employee all of my life and have learned a lot from my own mistakes. So bringing my knowledge and expertise to others who are trying to make the world better is a real joy."

In July 2006, Outon was named a *NonProfit Times* Power & Influence Top 50 Honoree. In May 2008, she received the Pearl of Excellence Award from the Girl Scouts of Western Pennsylvania – the organization's highest honor, which is given to a woman who exemplifies sacrifice in service to the community.

Outon is also a founding member of the Peter F. Drucker Foundation international training team. The late Drucker, who's widely considered to be the father of modern management, once said that the 21st century would be the century of the social sector. In one of Outon's favorite quotes, Drucker once asked, "What are you going to do Monday morning?" It is a quote that Outon recalls often for inspiration.

"Unlike a lot of people, I look forward to Mondays," she says. "Each new week is another chance to help someone grow their nonprofit organization, which in turn will benefit those in need. I love my work, and I couldn't imagine doing anything else."

Written By Valentine J. Brkich
Photography By Kevin Cooke



The Mattress Factory

Catena Bahneman, Assistant Director

I think the Bayer Center is very important because they provide a necessary resource for many nonprofits.

I first became involved with the Bayer Center for Nonprofit Management by attending several of the workshops they provide. One of our board members had suggested I look into their classes, and I ended up enrolling in the Quickbooks/Financial 101 classes, as well as one on Excel, and also their HR workshop series.

Since my job involves several departments, such as accounting and HR, I was able not only to pick up more efficient ways to do things, but I also discovered areas that I didn't even realize I had overlooked. The Bayer Center helped me set up procedures and provided necessary backup tools to refer to. I worked with several of the in-house instructors and attended a breakfast seminar with Executive Director Peggy Outon, and I also worked with professionals in the field – employment lawyers – for the HR workshop. I also worked with a member of their Executive Service Corps to help us with our employee handbook.

The biggest challenge I face in the nonprofit industry is being responsible for many areas in our organization, while many for-profit companies have entire departments responsible for those same duties. The Bayer Center has been a great help to me by showing me the best way to manage all my responsibilities and get the most out of our resources.

The Bayer Center for Nonprofit Management is an incredible resource for the Pittsburgh region, and here at The Mattress Factory, we're so glad to have such a valuable partner to help us achieve our goals.

able information and resources to a lot of organizations in the area." – Kevin Perkey, 3 Rivers Connect