

First cohort of nonprofit leaders complete training

By Ashley Gilliam

The inaugural class of the ASU Lodestar Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Innovation's Generation Next Nonprofit Leadership Academy (Gen Next) graduated from its nine-month training May 8 at the Disability Empowerment Center in Phoenix.

Funded by a generous contribution from American Express, Gen Next is a cohort of the Valley's top emerging nonprofit leaders, chosen to participate in training that provides them with the knowledge and tools needed to take on leadership roles within the nonprofit community. The program comprises best practice approaches to leading and managing nonprofits that include renowned professors and practitioner instructors at ASU, as well as established nonprofit leaders from organizations that engage with the ASU Lodestar Center.

While many look to improve their job marketability during these challenging economic times, Gen Next is providing valuable opportunities for nonprofit professionals to increase their knowledge and leadership skills.

"Through Gen Next, I have learned a lot about my own leadership style and under what circumstances I work most effectively," says Chela Sullivan, a recent graduate of ASU's Master of Nonprofit Studies program and current Helping Hands Housing Services staff member. "I have also learned that as a manager, I can bring out other people's strength by recognizing their leadership styles as well."

Jany Deng, another member of the inaugural class, was a recipient of nonprofit assistance 10 years ago when he came to the United States as a refugee from Sudan. He graduates this year from the Gen Next

program on his road to being a leader in the nonprofit sector.

"As a recipient of services in the past, I have seen how important organization and leadership are in a nonprofit," Deng says. "Through Gen Next, I learned areas that I need to improve on and I also learned areas that are my strengths. This knowledge will help me to be a better coworker and to provide better services to my clients."

Laura Capello, program specialist for Gen Next, is thrilled with the success of the first year.

"I have already seen the class members make good use of what they have learned and of the contacts they have made," Capello says. "They have all become close, and have used each other to help them with the challenges and share in their joys of working in the nonprofit sector."

Amy Schwabenlender, a Valley of the Sun United Way Gen Next participant, says her favorite part of Gen Next was the connections she made with other members.

"The opportunity to meet other like-minded individuals who have similar career desires in the nonprofit sector was of great use to me," Schwabenlender says. "It has been not only fun, but beneficial to my work to meet and get to know my classmates. Several of us have found ways to collaborate and share information that was not previously occurring between our organizations."

Applications for the second Gen Next cohort will be available in June.

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