

INSPIRING CHANGE



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Inspiration comes from many different sources and sometimes comes when you least expect it. In 2012, I had the pleasure of attending my first NAYDO conference in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. I also participated in the Young Professionals program during the conference. The level of young talent in our movement and the discussions we had were inspiring and it was great to see so many passionate young professional staff articulate the power of financial development. In the end, I took away so many great interactions and stories that it was an invaluable experience.

While participating in the opening dinner of the Young Professionals program, we had the opportunity to hear from YMCA Canada Chief Executive Officer Scott Haldane. Mr. Haldane's presentation had a profound impact on my approach to financial development and my YMCA. His presentation was clearly articulated and concise and revolved around how young professionals can shape the movement by recognizing the importance of financial development. He spoke to us about how our campaign is more than just raising money, it is about changing our community for the better. He stated that financial development allows us to tell our important story to our communities and allows us to demonstrate that our mission is paramount to our work. Furthermore, he told us that YMCAs need to set goals for the campaigns that are a "stretch" and that mirror the amount we are allocating. He emphasized that if we are setting goals for campaigns that we know at kickoff we will reach then we need to come up with a new, better goal because the need is there.

I left that dinner feeling energized about our movement and inspired to change the way we run our annual campaign in Wapakoneta, Ohio. The Wapakoneta Family YMCA, an Eagle Award winner, had allocated around \$125,000 to \$150,000 a year in financial assistance awards; however, we set our fundraising goals around \$50,000 each year. I remember leaving that dinner and texting one of my campaign volunteers saying that I was inspired to set a goal that would make a tremendous impact in our community. I waited anxiously for a response from the volunteer telling me I was out of my mind! However, the response I got was, "You sound inspired. Let's do it." Amazing that I was able to invoke that much excitement in a text message! So, with the inspiration from Mr. Haldane, we set a goal of \$100,000 for our 2013 Annual Support Campaign. This represented a 100% increase in our goal from two years ago. After the goal was announced some volunteers became nervous and expressed concern over such a large goal. I can remember several

conversations where I invoked Mr. Haldane's enthusiasm and excitement about telling our story and in the end I knew the donors would also be inspired.

On March 7, 2013, after the five weeks of campaign, the Chair announced that our staff and volunteers had raised over \$113,000. This was amazing for a community of less than 10,000 people who had struggled to raise \$70,000 a year prior. As we analyzed our campaign, we realized that setting the larger goal inspired our campaigners and volunteers to tell our story about how many people we serve and inspired donors to give more generously. The larger goal, and more emphasis on how we tell our stories, allows our donors to more clearly see the cause of the YMCA. Our YMCA also proudly participates in a regional annual campaign, and the group sharing and joint marketing materials helped shape our communications.

The NAYDO conference is a great experience for a YMCA professional, young or seasoned. I was able to attend multiple sessions that provided insight into how we can better our movement in regards to financial development. I was able to interact with many people who had their own YMCA story that added a unique networking opportunity. It is evident that our movement has so many talented staff and volunteers.

The NAYDO conference and the Young Professionals program helped shape our campaign. The fundamentals and the materials I garnered from the sessions made a tremendous impact on our campaign, but also our community. Being a small-town YMCA, we are sometimes limited in how we can creatively approach our donors. Without the valuable tools and networking

experiences from the conference, I know that our YMCA wouldn't have been as successful and hundreds of people in our community wouldn't know our story. Furthermore, the advice of Scott Haldane has a universal message to our YMCAs throughout

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the movement. If we set "stretch" goals we will be amazed at how our volunteers and our community rise up for the challenge and we will be inspired to grow our campaign based on our stories, our impact, our cause and our mission. Furthermore, I am sure that Mr. Haldane did not realize the impact that his presentation would have on a group of young professionals and a community hundreds of miles away, but it speaks to the impact a conversation at a NAYDO conference can have on you.