

## Group Aims to Assist Lynn Non-profits

By David Liscio/Lynn Item

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LYNN—Charitable funding sources are drying up amid hard economic times, making it more difficult for non-profit organizations to carry out their missions.

But the Jericho Road Project hopes to change that situation in Lynn, home to hundreds of non-profit organizations, by providing free white-collar expertise in such fields as accounting, marketing, architectural design, IT, fundraising and business development.

The Jericho Road Project has already established service programs in Lawrence, Lowell and Worcester and plans are under way to replicate that success in Lynn. To jump start the initiative, the GE River Works Credit Union donated \$5,000 Tuesday, the first local contribution. Concord-based Jericho Road contributed \$25,000 toward the Lynn effort, which will require about \$70,000 for its annual operating budget.

Maria Bazzi, chief executive officer of the credit union, presented the check to Maria Deacon, the GE regional executive, during a ceremony at the aircraft engine plant. Deacon was named an honorary member of the Jericho Road Project Board of Directors.

"We felt this was a project we wanted to put our money into," said Bazzi. "It's a good cause."

The fundraising will continue until the goal is reached and Jericho Road Project opens a Lynn office in January, according to Dan Holin, the organization director.



Maria Deacon, General Electric's regional executive; Dan Holin of Jericho Road; Mark Kennard of Lynn Non-Profit Business Association; Maria Bazzi, CEO of GE River Works Credit Union and Dave Hyde of General Electric.

*Item photo / Owen O'Rourke*

"Free expertise is an incredible resource for a non-profit," he said. "We increase the performance of non-profits, which are the organizations that affect the quality of life in their communities."

Mark Kennard, director of the Project COPE drug rehabilitation project in Lynn, said the city has hundreds of non-profit organizations ranging in complexion from the Little League and the Boy Scouts to an array of recreational, athletic, child care, arts and social service groups. The Lynn Non-profit Business Association, established in 2001, currently has 23 members, he said.

Jericho Road Project conducted a survey in Lynn to determine if the need for its service exists. "Most non-profits don't have access to this kind of expertise, especially fledgling non-profits," he said, noting that donations to non-profit organizations is down 30-40 percent. "Sixty percent of Lynn non-profits will lose money this year."

Kennard said about 14 Lynn non-profit organizations expressed a need for assistance.

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Bill Hayes, a GE engineer and president of the Lynn Shelter Association, said the company has a long history of community service. "We do lots of drive-by projects," he said, referring to painting, carpentry and clean-up efforts. "But we are changing our focus as we try to forge lasting relationships."

According to Hayes, the Jericho Road Project matches volunteers with the organizations that need their services.

David Hyde, another GE engineer on the local Jericho Road Project "dream team," said 150 people with a wide array of professional skills responded to the local survey seeking potential volunteers. "Not everybody can hammer a nail," he said.

Andy Macy, a Jericho Road Project board member, said GE's human resources department has signed an agreement that allows the volunteers among its employees to provide their expertise.

"GE is like an oil field under this city," said

Holin, relishing the resources that the global company might provide. "We merely have to drill down and tap into its potential."

Holin said the Jericho Road Project delivered 2,000 hours of service in Lowell during 2008, working with 38 non-profit groups. "The total value of those services and materials was \$538,000 and in Lowell we cost \$100,000."

Hayes said funding organizations look for bottom lines like the one in Lowell.

"We feel like we're in the right place at the right time," Holin said.

Deacon, the GE executive, acknowledged that the sour economy has created a growing need among non-profit organizations. "It's tough out there," she said, explaining that she routinely receives requests for financial assistance from many groups. "We'll do what we can."