

## **Case Study: Trinity Cooperative Day Nursery**

### **A Well Trained Board, Interim Leadership, Strategic Planning and a Continued Commitment to Fulfilling Roles and Responsibilities**

Since 1972, Trinity Cooperative Day Nursery (TCDN) has provided childcare and education in a family setting, throughout the Swarthmore and Wallingford areas. A lot of expectations come with having the word “cooperative” in your name, calling for “a spirit of willingness, open communication and caring within the organization,” and its board works to embody that spirit.

Childhood educator Dana Semos, currently Managing Director of the Chester Children’s Chorus, leads the board, but its experience in working with The Nonprofit Center on board development, preceded her tenure as president when TCDN experienced its first comprehensive board training in 2011.

That first contact was The Nonprofit Center’s signature program – a best practices training for the entire board - so that they understand their true roles, responsibilities and liabilities of board membership. This program is a free benefit for organizations that become MemberPlus organizations of The Center, and Dana said it was particularly valuable because many were first-time board members, including parents of attending children. “The training is so straightforward, giving guidance, helping you understand correct board structure,” she said, adding “it really helped our board understand its roles.” She further applauds its value in having the board sit down together and think about the bigger picture, building the community of the board.

*“The Best Practices Board Training helped building the community of the board.”*

The Nonprofit Center was a close ally of TCDN during a time of executive transition, by matching them with an Interim Executive Director after the departure of their executive director, and providing support during this important period. In addition to providing an “amazing” interim, Dana cited the importance of having a board training during this period. She added that although several of the board members had participated in the previous training, it “took us to the next level, within the framework of a new leader. It enabled us to effectively support the new position and to provide continuity for the organization.” She added that while giving a big picture perspective, the training was also practical.

According to Dana, having an experienced Interim Executive Director gave TCDN the time it needed to figure out exactly what it needed in a new leader, while providing strong leadership, making useful recommendations and helping them think through

important questions about the job description and the skills and perspectives most needed so that they could find the right fit.

While The Nonprofit Center has a corps of specialized consultants, this Interim Executive was also a consultant skilled in organizational development and strategic planning. She was thus able to lead TCDN through a strategic planning process. Dana affirms that the organization has “benefited significantly from her knowledge about the organization, making it a much more efficient process and allowing them to spend their time strategically.”

The process included a board retreat at which they began drafting their goals and action steps and Dana said they plan another session that will focus specifically on fundraising.

She summarized TCDN’s continuing experience with The Nonprofit Center in this way: “The wealth of experience and resources they bring gave us the guidance and the confidence to accomplish what we’ve needed to do throughout this period of growth and change. It has made our work much more manageable and put us on the right path, that we continue to follow,” she concluded.