

Who Are the Young Leaders?

By Emily Davis

Where are the next generation of nonprofit leaders, and what are they doing? The following profiles highlight the treasure trove of great leaders eager to help nonprofits reach their greatest potential.

Irene Fernando

is co-founder and co-executive director of Students Today Leaders Forever (STLF), a nonprofit that builds leaders through service, relationships, and action. STLF's core program is the Pay it Forward Tour, where students travel around the country doing service and engaging in leadership and reflection activities. STFL believes that a core of three to five people can accomplish anything if the unit stays true to three concepts: commitment to a mission, respect for each other as people and friends, and trust that success is the only option.

Irene received her B.S. in business from the Carlson School on Management and is pursuing a Masters in education in the Youth Development Leadership Program at the University of Minnesota's College of Education and Human Development. She is on the board of the Charities Review Council and Knova Learning, a new charter school. She co-coordinates Twin Cities Marathon events and is actively involved in her sorority, Alpha Gamma Delta.

Irene's advice to emerging leaders: "Know your values, and prioritize them in a meaningful way. Every idea is worth considering. Good ideas won't wait, so act now. Learn always, and ask for advice whenever you can. (Take the advice every now and then, too.) We must hold hand-in-hand to really change this world. No one person, organization, or perspective will be enough to truly make long-lasting impact... which is great because that means we can do it together!"



Mike Gast, the family philanthropy coordinator at Resource Generation (RG), is a social change philanthropist, donor organizer, and fundraiser.

He co-coordinated the Movement Generation Support Committee, a donor circle supporting young progressive leaders. He lives in Seattle, plays rugby with the Seattle Quake, and is a graduate of Vassar College.

Mike is most proud of the number of young people with wealth he has helped move from inaction to action through his work at Resource Generation. He has always loved the initial one-on-one meeting with new members (young people with wealth or access to wealth) who are just finding out about Resource Generation and then seeing them develop their leadership over the next months and years. "It's astounding to see folks move from not being able to talk at all about their financial resources to coming up with a giving plan to move major dollars to the issues they care about," he says.

Some of the best advice he has received has been: Create a work plan at the beginning of the week that you can use. Learn to say "no." Laugh. Celebrate success. Remember that it's never the best time to take a day off...so take it now. Find mentors, and create ways to work with them. Focus on building strong relationships. And remember: "If you wish to go quickly, go alone. If you wish to go far, go together."

Sharna Goldseker

has 14 years' experience in the nonprofit sector, including 11 as a grantmaker and as a consultant to families, foundations, and federations on next-generation and multigenerational philanthro-



py. Sharna is vice president of the Andrea and Charles Bronfman Philanthropies (www.ACBP.net) where she directs 21/64 (www.2164.net), a nonprofit consulting division specializing in next-generation and multi-generational strategic philanthropy.

Sharna graduated with a B.A. from the University of Pennsylvania with majors in urban studies and religious studies. She has a Masters in public administration in nonprofit management from New York University's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, where she was the inaugural Charles H. Tenney Fellow. She serves on the board of the Goldseker Foundation as well as the Council on Foundations' Committee on Family Philanthropy, which she previously chaired. Sharna's greatest accomplishment to date, she says, is her son.

Colin Parent

co-director of the New Leaders Council of San Diego, is an attorney and political organizer who works for the international law firm PLA Piper. In 2010, the San Diego News Network named him to its list of "35 Under 35 San Diego community leaders who are shaping the region we live in, and beyond." In 2009, *San Diego Metropolitan Magazine* named him one of its "40 Under 40" program honoring young entrepreneurs, and the *San Diego Daily Transcript* named him among its "Top Young Attorneys for 2009." Colin attended the University of California San Diego, where he earned a bachelor's degree in political science with an emphasis in international relations in 2003. While at UCSD, Colin was involved on a variety of levels with campus government.

Founder of the San Diego Lawyers Chapter of the American Constitution Society, an organization dedicated to a progressive view of



the Constitution and the law, Colin is also co-director and founder of the San Diego chapter of the New Leaders Council, an entrepreneurial leadership program for progressive young professionals. He is on the boards of the League of Conservation Voters of San Diego, the San Diego County Young Democrats, the Young Professionals Committee of the San Diego LGBT Community Center, and the Young Alumni Council of UCSD. Colin is Catholic, an Eagle Scout, and a member of Scouting for All. According to Colin, his greatest accomplishment has been forming “very diverse groups of participants” in the nonprofits of which he’s been a part.

“My work with nonprofits has primarily been as a volunteer organizer and board member,” Colin says. “My advice for people with a similar role is this: Treat volunteer work with the same rigor as your professional activities. A reputation for thoroughness, commitment, and ingenuity can be built (and destroyed) through volunteer work. Answer e-mails promptly. Run meetings with clear agendas. Dress professionally. Do what you promise to do. Even though you’re volunteering, people expect the same professionalism you bring to the workplace.

“On a similar note, volunteers will treat their service more seriously if the nonprofit organization sets the proper tone. Whenever possible, I try to host meetings in a professional environment, often in my law firm’s conference rooms.”



Josh Solomon

is the associate director for technical assistance at YouthBuild USA and manages technical assistance and program improvement for a portfolio of 80 YouthBuild sites. Chair of the Young Nonprofit Professionals Network (YNPN) national board, Josh has an MBA from the Yale School of Management and over 12 years’ experience in nonprofit management, fundraising, information technology, and operations.

Josh serves on the board of The Food Project (\$3 million sustain-

able agriculture/youth development nonprofit in Greater Boston area). As its interim director, he led the search committee to select a new executive director.

“Your network will be increasingly critical in doing your job and in finding new jobs and opportunities,” Josh tells young professionals. “Take advantage of your network and grow it as much as possible. And consider serving on a nonprofit board—they’re in great need of dedicated, passionate members with new perspectives. YNPN chapters can be a great first board—consider getting involved at the local level if there’s a chapter in your community. Or start one.”

As the director of civic engagement for the Building Movement Project, **Trish Tchume** helps integrate social change values and practices into nonprofit organizations. Before joining the Building Movement Project in 2008, Trish served



as a campus organizer and then as a community outreach manager for the Action Without Borders/Idealist organization (www.idealists.org). Additionally, she serves on the national board of the Young Nonprofit Professionals Network. Through each of these roles, Trish has helped strengthen nonprofits’ social justice work by connecting them with resources and networking opportunities.

Trish advises Next Gen leaders to take ownership of their professional development. “Connecting to networks or joining boards can help you develop in ways that are structured and enjoyable,” she says. ■

A young professional herself, Emily Davis is president and lead consultant at EDA Consulting (edaconsulting@gmail.com, www.edaconsulting.org, www.edaconsultingcafe.blogspot.com), serving small to mid-size nonprofits locally, nationally, and internationally, helping them accomplish their goals and feed their passions, and matching the head with the heart to bring about successful outcomes.

RESOURCES

WEB SITES

- Founded by teens and driven by youth, Students Today Leaders Forever (STLF), www.stlf.net, seeks to inspire leadership in young people. Its programs provide meaningful leadership experience and encourage students to become catalysts for positive change.
- The Young Nonprofit Professionals Network (YNPN, www.ynppn.org), supports future nonprofit leaders through professional development, networking, and social opportunities designed for young people.
- A site devoted to next-generation nonprofit leaders, www.2164.net describes ways to embrace each generation’s contributions. This site includes a link to Picture Your Legacy, a deck of image cards that can tap into the professional or funder you aspire to be in the world (<http://www.2164.net/store/tool/picture-your-legacy>).
- New Leaders Council (NLC), www.newleaderscouncil.org, trains the next generation of progressive entrepreneurs to support robust civic life.
- The Building Movement Project, www.buildingmovement.org, works to help nonprofits build movement for progressive social change.

ARTICLES & BRIEFS from *Nonprofit World* (www.snpo.org/members):

- Are You Ready for the Millennials? (Vol. 26, No. 6, p. 25)
- The Boomer-Millennial Workplace: How to Defuse the Tension (Vol. 28, No. 4)
- Why Wisdom Is Being Lost—and How You Can Capture It (Vol. 27, No. 6)
- Are Your Employees Happy at Work? (Vol. 26, No. 2, p. 31)
- Creating an Inclusive Workplace (Vol. 24, No. 4)
- Shared Leadership (Vol. 14, No. 5)
- Using Social Media to Advance Your Goals (Vol. 27, No. 1)
- Is It Time to Consider New Ways to Communicate? (Vol. 25, No. 4)