

Nonprofits step up in times of crisis



BETSY NELSON
Charitable Giving

including some capacities, skills and resources that no other sector may be as well positioned to contribute:

“The philanthropic and nonprofit sector has a critical perspective to bring to broader community and state disaster preparedness and response. That contribution arises from our sector’s special focus on and responsibility for vulnerable populations. Nonprofit organizations and foundations are typically focused on the interests of the disadvantaged, excluded and vulnerable, whether they be the poor, at-risk children, troubled youth, the disabled, the homeless, frail older folks, non-English speaking newcomers, or the clients of juvenile justice, child welfare, mental health, long-term care and correctional systems.

“These groups, as we all know, have a tough enough go in the best of times. But in times of crisis, confusion and calamity, they are exceptionally vulnerable and at-risk. I think it’s the particular responsibility of the foundations and nonprofits who serve these groups to see that their special needs and special interests are fully and thoughtfully anticipated in the preparedness plans our communities make and in the response and recovery actions that we implement.

Providing valuable resources

“Foundations and nonprofits possess certain kinds of assets and resources that can significantly strengthen state and local emergency readiness. For one thing, foundations have money they can invest in

Last week, I was pleased to join Gov. Martin O’Malley, Baltimore Mayor Sheila Dixon and more than 150 leaders from across the state for the Maryland Meta-Leadership Summit for Preparedness — an event to bring business, government and nonprofit leaders together to better prepare for public health and safety crises.

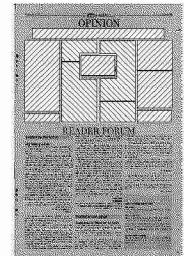
The Meta-Leadership Summit for Preparedness is a national initiative to hone leadership skills needed during times of crisis and to strengthen the network of people and organizations ready to act cooperatively in an emergency. The nation’s response to events such as Hurricane Katrina, 9/11 and the H1N1 flu highlight the importance of leaders working together and sharing information and resources during major emergencies.

Most of us assume that the business of anticipating and responding to emergencies and disasters is the business of first-responders, emergency management offices, public health and hospital folks, and maybe large organizations such as the American Red Cross. We may even see the connection that the corporate sector might play.

Helping the most vulnerable

But the roles philanthropies and nonprofits should and need to play in emergency preparedness, response and recovery may be less apparent.

As Douglas W. Nelson, president/CEO of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, stated at the summit, the philanthropic and nonprofit sector has a great deal to bring to the table,



stronger planning and coordination. Foundations can also deploy dollars flexibly and, if necessary, quickly. Perhaps most important, nonprofit agencies and operating foundations have an exceptional stock of human capital — social workers, counselors, child care specialists, planners, trainers, home care workers, benefit specialists, therapists, and others whose special skills and training can add invaluable depth to a city or state's response and recovery.

"The Annie E. Casey Foundation learned the power of this asset when we volunteered our most experienced Casey Family Services clinical social workers to help with crisis and grief counseling in New York City after 9/11.

"All of this is to say that foundations and nonprofits have an important role in the business of emergency

planning and disaster response. We not only have a lot to contribute but the populations and groups we exist to serve also have a critical stake in the quality of our states' and communities' emergency readiness."

The summit was hosted by Gov. O'Malley, Mayor Dixon, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Association of Baltimore Area Grantmakers, the Greater Baltimore Committee, the Johns Hopkins Center for Event Preparedness and Response, the Johns Hopkins Hospital and Health System, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and M&T Bank.

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