** NEST Board Meeting**

**September 15, 2022 Minutes**

**Present**: Cris Riedel, Chris Donnald, Lynn Schweikart, Jim Brule (left around 7:00), ChaChanna Simpson, Katie Knutson, Rona Leventhal, Barbara Aliprantis, Linda Schuyler Ford, Denise Page (Arrived at 6:46)

**Meeting Start:** 6:36pm

**Call to Order**

**Motion to approve the August 2022 board meeting minutes. (Approved 7-0). Motion by Cris, Seconded by ChaChanna**

**Consent Agenda**

* Nothing to discuss on submitted reports this month

**Executive Director Report**

* Katie started off with a discussion on calling members to renew their memberships. Katie is going to assign each board member a list of names to call. The goal is to go back through at least the beginning of the pandemic and try to recover any members that were lost at that time.
* Katie had a discussion with Ann Shapiro, the director of the Connecticut Storytelling Center about any ways the two organizations can help each other out. They talked about the membership diversity of the two groups and trying to find a way to match the demographics of the organizations to that of the geographic areas. There was a focus on trying to target Hispanic/Bilingual communities to try and help promote the art of storytelling. It would be an easily fundable opportunity and there could be potential to tie it into the Fly, Mentorship, and Social Justice programs. Jim had a concern about the visual of a predominately white organization trying to teach storytelling to other races. He suggested making other communities the center of attention and have them teach NEST storytelling in an effort to grow NEST instead of promote itself solely as the community it currently is. Barbara brought up how bilingual could include more than just English/Spanish and Katie clarified that the initial goal would be with the English/Spanish community. This would provide a more targeted approach to include a new community instead of trying to be ‘everything to everyone’. Cris pointed out that a couple members have brought up the issue in the past of there not being any emphasis or support for the Hispanic community. Linda pointed out that NEST has lost a decent amount of members to the Connecticut Storytelling Center as it is also a membership organization. She urged us to make sure that NEST is protected and that the end result is that NEST members are also promoted. Jim suggested that it is a valid effort and that maybe NEST tackles this issue on its own.
* On the topic of grants, Katie requested that each board member contribute at least $1 so that when grants ask about 100% board financial contribution, that can be checked off. Lynn wanted to know about adding a button to the automatic membership renewal email with a link to the donation page to streamline the donation process.
* Katie is working on increasing NEST’s social media presence. She asked if ChaChanna, Barbara, and Lynn can monitor Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter respectively and they agreed. Cris and Barbara will help monitor the listserv to speak for NEST, and to pass along any info that is necessary to Katie.
* The next topic discussed was whether to include demographic information on the call for proposals and olio submissions. Rona updated that she believes that information does not belong on these specific applications. She brought up that the organization would have to decide whether it is going to start collecting this type of data and if it would be a turnoff for applicants. Barbara questioned whether it’s something that even needs to be a concern in this day in age. Denise countered that this type of information is very important in showing diversity in an organization especially when it comes to applying for grants. Katie added that this information does not only include race but other demographics and that we can use the information in trying to be a more inclusive organization. She also brought up that as a organization that is predominately older, youth needs to be added and welcomed to the organization otherwise it will die. Denise suggested having a box on the forms that give the applicants the opportunity to self-describe/identify. Rona was concerned that it would feel more like an essay question and that check boxes might gather more answers. Cris agreed with this. All the information would be optional to provide. Denise added that there is a lot of pushback in her circle with the boxes due to the limited and sometimes ridiculous nature of the options. Rona felt that the best applicants should be chosen regardless of their race and that certain applicants might feel hesitant to apply if they don’t check ‘certain boxes’. ChaChanna countered that the information is being collected NOT to use as any sort of criteria for determining which applicants to choose and that the data is used solely to show the direction the organization is going in. Rona agreed that this should include in other opportunities such as event registration and membership sign up and that it is good to include as long as the purpose of the data is made explicitly clear.
* **Motion to add carefully worded demographic request information to the call for proposals and olio submissions.** **Motion by Barbara, Seconded by ChaChanna. (Approved 7-0)**

**Program**

* Rona indicated that all information is in the Google doc and the only issue (demographic data collection) was discussed.
* Lynn thanked Linda for putting together NEST Fest and everyone else for their participation. Cris wanted to know who the recordings are going to be made available to as NEST Fest was promoted as free to members. Rona and Katie suggested that the recordings be made available to everyone who wants to watch.

**Finance**

* Cris had some questions for Lori but has not been able to get in contact with her yet due to illness. Cris asked the board whether they want to stick with PayPal now that the account has been cleared out or to stop using it due to difficulty with them in the past. Lynn added that staff can’t be paid through PayPal anymore due to tax reasons which was the main usage. Rona added that it’s convenient for people that want to pay for things with Credit Card. Cris provided the option of just creating a new PayPal account for NEST that has updated personnel as admins for the account. Cris also made a script for people to use when the board members call the membership in regards to membership and donations along with any additional information that might be needed.

**Outreach**

* ChaChanna and Barbara are going to make a big push for the mentorship program at Sharing the Fire. ChaChanna brought up the idea of coming up with a welcome packet for new members. She also brought up the idea of completely redoing the website at some point to make it more user friendly.
* **Motion to look into revamping/redoing the website.** **Motion by Lynn, Seconded by ChaChanna. (Approved 7-0)**

**Tech**

* Chris brought up the issue of weekly events email issues with the membership over both versions that were tried. Moving forward he will take a screenshot of the calendar for the week and send the screenshot with a link to the calendar.

**President’s Report**

* Lynn updated that the information was either provided in the President’s report to look over or will be covered at the board retreat in greater detail such as the website.
* The board went over the 14 attributes of Leadership chart. The board will send their responses to Katie to gather the information and compile a master list of where the board feels the organization is based on the criteria in the provided document. Katie commented on the reliability and capability of the staff NEST has and that other non-profits are struggling to interview candidates like that let alone hire. There was a discussion on how to use the chart to evaluate the organization and clarify the different categories and how to use it as a Launchpad to come up with questions to better the organization. Lynn brought up making sure that skill diversity is looked at amongst the board members and discuss what skills would be a beneficial addition when recruiting new board members.
* Katie threw out the idea of extending the board retreat to a full weekend or have an overnight component to allow more time for work and to have a less intense day on having all travel and work on a single idea. Rona agreed that it would be more productive to have an increased amount of time. Since Linda is flying into town, extending to Friday would be easier than Sunday. Lynn agreed that Friday to Saturday would work better than Saturday and Sunday. Rona’s availability is flexible for either Friday or Saturday. Barbara is going to look into hotel options and confirmed the room at her complex would be available to use. ChaChanna is going to check her schedule. Katie recommended doing a little work on Friday and then doing something fun in the evening, and then spending all day Saturday working. Denise has availability that weekend provided there will be birthday cake for her birthday.

**Old Business**

* None to report

**New Business**

* None to report

Next Meeting: 10/20/22 at 6:30pm

Meeting Adjourned 8:16pm