

MAKING Connections

To begin to understand this concept, we must first understand that no single board is able to deal with the complexity and scale of the problems now faced by the nonprofit sector. They are too great. As David Renz puts it, the future is no longer “the networked organization” but rather “the organization as network.” (“Reframing Governance,” *The Nonprofit Quarterly*, Winter 2006.) Instead of a myriad of institutions all operating in isolation from, and often in competition with, each other, the new landscape is likely to resemble a honeycomb with allied entities that share resources.

Leading effectively in this type of environment requires the kind of ability and skill sets demonstrated by younger generations proficient in social networking from an early age. It will be a challenge to others. “Old” sources of power, such as having control over information, quickly disappear when that information becomes largely free. Similarly, “old-style” organizations and boards built on mutual back-scratching will be replaced by dynamic new groups committed to sharing power and knowledge in order to make a contribution to the whole. Innovative mergers and partnerships are likely to become the rule rather than the exception, requiring cross-sector and multifaceted communication skills from their boards. A focus on individual mission and survival, so urgent over the past few months, will gradually give way to a shared vision of a more coordinated, effective and sustainable future.

To achieve this, we need board members who are able and committed to rising to this challenge. In this new environment, any board that is homogenous in an ethnic, gender or generational sense will be at an enormous disadvantage. The speed of new developments in the philanthropic, communication, and other spheres will demand

The Land Trust Alliance created the Land Trust Board Member Challenge as a program to encourage every board member of land trusts across the country to get involved in the critical issues affecting all of our conservation work. To participate in the Board Member Challenge, board members join the Land Trust Alliance as individual members and connect with a national community of board members across the country. Since its inception in 2006, more than 75 land trusts have participated; 2009 was a record year for success!

This is the first year that Orient Land Trust (OLT) located in Villa Grove, Colorado, has been successful in the Board Member Challenge: 100% of Orient Land Trust board members have joined the Alliance.

Dan Jones knew it was important to motivate the OLT board to join: “As Orient Land Trust’s board chair and an Alliance member benefitting from *Saving Land* as well as Rally and The Learning Center, I felt it was imperative to have our entire board involved on this level.”

Dan’s commitment to the land began early on in his life. His great-

grandfather started a New England tree farm and his motto of “be good to the land and the land will be good to you” has been passed down through the generations of family members. Dan’s commitment to the land fueled his dedication to the Alliance Challenge. “The OLT board members are enhancing their understanding and appreciation of *Land Trust Standards and Practices* as the basis for OLT’s operations.”

OLT has also successfully tied the Challenge into their Colorado community. “As we undertake ever-increasing outreach within our rural community, we are including information about the national land trust community and the emerging standards by which it operates. By building awareness and educating the public, OLT is better establishing connections and trust within our local communities. We are concurrently bringing together other land trusts, federal and state land agencies as well as local governments to coalesce our missions within our area of operation,” Dan says.

As we begin 2010, the Challenge is in full swing once again. Dan is confident his group will have another successful year. “We will absolutely continue with the Board Member Challenge through both renewal and the inclusion of new directors. This is an ongoing process and one which requires continuity.”

Congratulations to the Orient Land Trust Challenge participants who have connected with the larger land trust movement! 🌱



Dan Jones

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE BOARD MEMBER CHALLENGE GO TO WWW.LTA.ORG/GET-INVOLVED/BMC.