

Nonprofits turn to the blogosphere to attract new donors, raise awareness

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WASHINGTON -

Although somewhat behind the curve, many local nonprofits are clueing in to the use of blogs as a way to reach out to younger donors and volunteers.

“It’s all been very recent,” said Marjorie Sims, vice president of programs and operations at The Women’s Foundation, a D.C.-based nonprofit working to increase the number of women that donate to charities.

The organization launched a redesigned Web site just last month that included a section for blogging. The page has already become the most popular one on the site, Sims said. Board members and Women’s Foundation staff blog about the organization’s fundraising efforts and female-focused issues, a strategy Sims hopes will bring unlikely donors to the table.

“Our typical donor is probably a woman between the ages of early 40s to 60s who may not be online as much for personal use as younger people are,” she said. “So we really have the strategy of being where our (typical) donor isn’t.”

The local chapter of The Arthritis Foundation also recently launched a blog on its Web site. The blog has been helpful in reaching out to younger Arthritis sufferers who may not realize the condition is common among people under 65.

“There are young people with arthritis and frankly that’s how they communicate,” said Calaneet Balas, president and chief executive officer of the Arthritis Foundation.

The foundation’s page also includes message boards and a section where visitors can set up profiles similar to MySpace.

The Bivings Group, a D.C.-based online communications firm, designed the new Web site for The Women’s Foundation and has plans to launch a similar blog-focused site for The Mid-Atlantic Innocence Project.

Todd Zeigler, senior vice president of The Bivings Group, said using the blogosphere is a good fit for nonprofits.

“Nonprofits are small and their budgets are strapped,” Zeigler said. “The technology is accessible ... (for nonprofits) trying to raise money or build awareness around their issues. Using blogs is a way to really connect with people.”

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