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CENTERPIECE

Community Foundation Director Takes National Post

Hill To Give Smaller Foundations 'A Voice'

By VIC BRADSHAW Daily News-Record Aug 25, 2017



Revlan Hill, executive director of The Community Foundation of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County, was recently named to the Community Foundations National Standards Board.

Stephen Swofford / DN-R

HARRISONBURG — When a call was put out for applicants to join the Community Foundations National Standards Board, Revlan Hill said one of her board members came to mind.

That board member had another thought — Hill should nominate herself.

So the executive director of The Community Foundation of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County submitted her name and qualifications and was tapped to be on the panel that sets the standards by which community foundations are accredited.

"It was a surprise," Hill said this week of her selection, announced in late July. "We do represent small community foundations.

"I felt like when I applied that smaller community foundations also need a voice in this process."

Community foundations are nonprofits that act as a conduit between donors and charitable organizations by managing property and money.

The Council on Foundations was formed in 1949 as a leadership organization for foundations and corporations that award grants. The standards board supports the council, helping keep foundation requirements relevant as rules and procedures change.

More than 96 percent of America's largest community foundations participate in the standards program, Hill said.

The local community foundation, she said, was managing 236 funds with a total of \$34.28 million in assets when its fiscal year ended June 30. Gifts to people and organizations totaled \$5.9 million during that year.

Peak At Potential Regs

Hill has worked with The Community Foundation of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County for 11 years, serving as its executive director since the start of 2014, so she brings plenty of experience to the standards board's table.

The national standards process was created in the late 1990s, she said, to provide a peer-driven accreditation program that exceeds legal requirements. If the enforcement of rigorous standards can ensure accountability, the hope is to avoid regulation by people unfamiliar with how the foundations operate.

"It's about assuring integrity in the accreditation process," said Hill, "and building a foundation for compliance in the community foundation community."

A key concern is compliance with ever-changing Internal Revenue Service regulations. She said the board reviews situations foundations face across the country and provides guidance about how they should operate, distribute funds and weigh community impact.

"We want to mitigate the risk of mistakes or unintentional wrongdoing that could result in noncompliance with IRS regulations," Hill said. "I think the standards provide for excellence in philanthropy."

Hill has attended one board meeting and said she's already been exposed to information that can benefit the local foundation. The panel got an advance look at potential regulations being considered by Congress.

The local organization has funds that "represent the whole spectrum of the nonprofit community," she said, and donors can tailor their philanthropy toward the areas that most interest them.

The Community Foundation of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County, said Hill, is committed to maintaining its national certification.

"We owe that to our donors, to philanthropy in general," she said, "and to our community."

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