



NATIONAL DANCE INSTITUTE OF NEW MEXICO



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Any experienced rainmaker knows campaigns can be tedious, time-consuming and intimidating. So the fact that National Dance Institute-New Mexico—an organization that had never undertaken a campaign of any size—achieved their \$7.3 million goal in under two years might seem like beginner’s luck. But, take into account that 75 percent of those funds came from just 17 donors, and it’s evident that the organization’s leadership simply mastered the key to major gift fundraising—the art of cultivation.

National Dance Institute was founded in 1976 in New York City by Jacques d’Amboise, formerly principal dancer for the New York City Ballet. In 1990 d’Amboise established National Dance Institute-New Mexico (NDI-NM) in Santa Fe. In 1994, Catherine Oppenheimer, formerly a dancer with the New York City Ballet and the Twyla Tharp modern dance company, became NDI-NM’s Artistic Director. One year later, the organization received its 501(c)(3) status.

NDI-NM offers various programs including Residency and Teaching Excellence instruction. Their In-School program, the most prominent and far-reaching, is brought to select public schools as part of the regular curriculum. No child is excluded because of physical or financial constraints. The program is offered to students—nearly 70 percent of whom are from below-poverty-level homes and of Native American or Hispanic heritage—at no direct cost to parents or guardians.

Entire classrooms come alive with the chanting, stomping, wiggling and singing of school children each and every day as the organization’s 27 certified instructors motivate more than 5,000 children and involve more than 140 public teachers in 64 schools throughout the state. The teamwork required to take the leap—literally and figuratively—from novice to performer is nurtured throughout the intensive 30-week program which culminates in a blockbuster performance for parents, teachers and friends.

TOUCHING LIVES

“Over the last four years, students in 13 regular education and 11 special education classes have had the opportunity to learn dance techniques and self-discipline, to develop new skills and take pride in their accomplishments, to make mistakes and strive for excellence, and to have their spirits and their lives elevated,” noted Karin Butchart, Principal, Eubank Elementary School.

Since its founding, NDI-NM has taught over 17,700 children—most of whom would not be exposed to the arts in any way, shape or form without the programs offered by NDI-NM. But for each child they reached, the leadership of NDI-NM knew there were at least two more they were unable to reach.

“NDI’s programs enrich more than the lives of the dancers—they touch families, teachers and the entire community,” said Jarratt Applewhite, former president of the Santa Fe Board of Education.

In fact, Applewhite and the Santa Fe School Board turned out to be enthusiastic allies. Impressed by NDI-NM’s programs, the School Board voted in 2001 to lease land to the organization for \$1 per year for 50 years and offered them an option to purchase.

The gift of land was also a turning point—and a sign of things to come.

MOVING FORWARD

“In my own mind, I had already decided that if we could get the land donated, it would be feasible for us to go forward with a campaign,” said Medora Jennings, who served as NDI-NM’s Board Chair at the time of the campaign. “While the gift of land represented to the community the confidence the School Board had in us—to us, the gift represented \$500,000 that we would not have to raise elsewhere.”

Only after careful consideration, planning and budgeting did they launch the “Making the Move” capital campaign—an endeavor to build a 31,200-square-foot facility they could call their own.

“Board members had a lot of concerns,” recounted Jennings. “With everything surrounding 9/11, we questioned whether or not to move forward. What it all came down to was the fact that we were so convinced it was the right thing to do. We knew the people who believed in us would support us.”

In addition, a \$1.5 million lead gift from a Board member was a key factor in the decision to move forward. One hundred percent Board participation included a \$1 million gift as well as several six-figure gifts, and opened the door for NDI-NM to approach foundations.

NDI-NM leaders had initially planned to raise \$4 million—funds that would cover their new building. The endowment component was an afterthought and a suggestion of professional campaign counselors, Susan Thomas, Executive Vice President, and Mandy Pons, Vice President, of Hartsook Companies, Inc., who counseled NDI-NM leaders to increase the goal to \$7.3 million.

“Once we decided to include the endowment, then it became frightening to think about what lay ahead,” said Artistic Director Catherine Oppenheimer, who has earned a great deal of adoration and respect for her integral role in NDI-NM. “But, we needed this new facility; we needed this new space.”

The “Making the Move” campaign was truly a collaborative effort with Board members bringing prospects and enthusiasm;

staff offering passion, hard work and devotion; and Hartsook Companies providing an understanding of philanthropy.

“Hartsook Companies was with us all the way, keeping us on track and focused,” noted Founding Chair Valerie T. Diker who also served as Campaign Co-chair.

Following successful Board solicitations, the next step was making contact with foundations. The J. E. and L. E. Mabee Foundation, Inc. (Tulsa, Okla.) ask resulted in a \$600,000 grant; an ask from the Kresge Foundation (Troy, Mich.) yielded a \$400,000 gift. Other gifts included grants from the Thaw Charitable Foundation.

“As a result of Susan and Mandy’s input and guidance, some of the pressure was taken off our shoulders,” stated Jennings. “They worked with us to generate major gifts and grants. They kept us on task and focused on what was most important.”

“Because of this campaign, NDI-NM is an even stronger organization,” noted Pons. “People who were already associated with the organization were passionate about its mission. The campaign offered NDI-NM an opportunity to cultivate new supporters and educate the community. The Board was so effective at utilizing the campaign as a reason to share NDI-NM’s message and bring new blood to the organization.”

Jennings agrees. “The campaign itself—what we were raising money for—gave us a superb vehicle. Once the building was up, we hosted hard-hat luncheons, took prospects on a tour of the facility and held private dinners and cocktails parties at which we would have 11 to 18 kids do a demonstration.”



Left to Right: Top - Garrett Thornburg; Rep. Tom Udall; Joseph L. Ponce; Mayor Larry Delgado; Sen. Jeff Bingaman; Medora Jennings; Jean Knapp. **Bottom** - Barbara Riley Levin; Gemtria St. Clair, Managing Director; Valerie T. Diker; Catherine Oppenheimer, Artistic Director.

INNOVATION SERVES AS CULTIVATION

NDI-NM's up-close-and-personal cultivation efforts were a case of a picture being worth a thousand words—and in many cases, thousands of dollars.

“Seeing is believing,” noted Jennings. “The dedication of the instructors; the concentration on the faces of these children as they’re performing; the smiles that genuinely show their enthusiasm and confidence, if we can get a prospective donor to one of our dances, or take them to a class, then we’ve got them.”

Although the 17 largest gifts helped NDI-NM secure the majority of their funds, leadership knew it was important to cultivate new donors and increase their profile in the community—something that had been suggested by one of the foundations to which they applied.

“The Dance-a-Thon was really important for building a broader base of supporters,” noted Oppenheimer. While the \$20,000 in proceeds from the event was small in comparison to their leadership gifts, the inaugural event was well received by the public and raised additional funds by garnering 400 new gifts. The event also served as the public phase of the campaign.

THE FINALE

“Garrett Thornburg and David Miller did a fabulous job from a public relations standpoint,” noted Thomas. “They took their respective roles very seriously and put together some unique publicity programs.”

At the groundbreaking ceremony, the outline of the building was cordoned off with ribbons, and naming opportunities were placed around the building site as 200 children shoveled dirt.



First Lady Laura Bush attended the grand-opening ceremonies which included an authentic Native American Aztec ceremony to bless the building. The event was the icing on the cake—a wildly colorful reward to the donors, volunteers and staff responsible for the campaign's success.

Catherine's husband, Garrett Thornburg, who not only Co-chaired the campaign, also served as Chair of the Building Committee. “We did it! Everything went according to schedule and we had a fabulous Grand Opening. It was great to give people tours as the place was taking shape—they couldn't help but catch the excitement of the project and see what was going to happen in the new space.”

NDI-NM's Board Chair Jean Knapp reflected, “The capital campaign was a great adventure for us. I am proud of our Board's generous response. That level of giving set the tone for the whole campaign and was an important factor in our ability to attract foundation grants. We are grateful for the energy, enthusiasm and expertise of Susan and Mandy—NDI-NM has an even greater opportunity to make a difference in the lives of these kids.”

Thomas and Pons wholeheartedly credit NDI-NM's leadership with the success. “Catherine and Jacques can certainly take a deep bow. The success they achieved was really a result of the time and energy they have put into cultivating donors and volunteers over the years,” noted Pons. “And, an added benefit of the campaign was the opportunity it offered them to broaden their existing support. I think that's the central theme of this campaign and its success—cultivation is key.”

For more information about Hartsook Companies, Inc., call 316.630.9992 or visit www.hartsookcompanies.com.



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