

Cases in **Nonprofit** **MANAGEMENT**

A Hands-On Approach to Problem Solving

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Human Resource Management

INTRODUCTION

Nonprofits are driven by human capital, relying much more heavily on people than machines to deliver on their social purpose missions. The Urban Institute (2014) estimates that the nonprofit sector employs approximately 10% of the workforce in the United States, and, unlike the for-profit and government sectors, nonprofit employment grew exponentially, throughout the Great Recession. Human resources in the nonprofit sector is different from other sectors as it includes both paid employees and volunteers. Therefore, to effectively manage human resources, leaders must identify the often unique factors that drive both paid employees and volunteers to work in the nonprofit sector. Maslow, Herzberg, Pink, and others (Pink, 2009; Worth, 2009) provide useful theoretical frameworks for understanding employee motivation. Many posit that individuals drawn to work in the nonprofit setting are more often than not driven by intrinsic

motivation (i.e., personal connection to the mission or alignment with personal values) rather than by extrinsic rewards such as public recognition or a big paycheck. However, the recent professionalization of the nonprofit sector has helped to make working for a nonprofit less of an either-or proposition. In other words, choosing a career in the nonprofit sector does not necessarily mean forgoing a fair wage and benefits. The tendency of nonprofit workers to be intrinsically motivated coupled with the inability of many nonprofits to provide traditional rewards such as fringe benefits or bonuses, increases the complexity managers of employees and volunteers face in the nonprofit sector.

Nonprofits must design and implement employee and volunteer policies that ensure compliance with all laws, both state and federal. While employment law differs from state to state, minimally there should be written job descriptions in place for each employee and policies that address the following:

- Hiring practices that ensure legal compliance with prevailing wage laws, interview questions, background checks, reference checks, and so on
- Compensation and benefits (including workers compensation policies and Family Medical Leave)
- Employee behavior expectations (rules for conduct and disciplinary action)
- Equal employment, sexual harassment, and nondiscrimination policies
- Sick leave and vacation time
- Performance evaluation
- Recording work hours
- Explanation of exempt and nonexempt employees
- Use of technology/social media policy
- Conflict of interest and nondisclosure policies
- Work hours and time off
- Health and safety regulations, including substance abuse
- Processes for hearing grievances, performance evaluations and documentation, and dismissal

Similar to other governing or policy documents, employment policies at a nonprofit should align with the mission and values of the organization. For example, nonprofits with a mission to fight poverty may want to consider wage policies that ensure their employees earn a living wage. Boards of directors and executives should review all policies on a regular basis.

Despite the tremendous importance of human effort to the success of nonprofits, for a variety of reasons the management of human resources (HR) remains an often neglected aspect of nonprofit management, many times left to managers who wear many other hats. Furthermore, since the majority of nonprofits are small and relatively flat, employees seeking to move up a traditional career ladder often have to job hop from one organization to another, making employee turnover a recurring challenge for nonprofit leaders. Yet, the growth and professionalization of the sector demands nonprofits be able to attract and retain top talent, therefore nonprofit leaders must be prepared to adequately address a variety of human resource issues including wages, benefits, chief executive officer (CEO) pay, and executive transition.

This chapter explores the following issues in greater detail about:

1. A staff member in crisis
2. Employee substance abuse
3. Volunteers ignoring the rules
4. When volunteers run amok

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CASE 6.1

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR STAFF MEMBERS IN CRISIS: A TRAGEDY WITH RIPPLE EFFECTS

Jennifer Yebba loved being executive director of Buffalo Urban Gardeners (BUG). Five years earlier, she and her good friend, Jamie Otis, founded the organization with a vision of transforming blighted vacant lots into neighborhood-managed fruit and vegetable gardens.

Buffalo had so many vacant lots that city officials had readily agreed to provide BUG with a community development block grant and access to the city's heavy equipment. Soon front-end loaders and backhoes driven by municipal employees were deployed to help Jennifer and Jamie realize their dream of an urban oasis. Buffalo had seen more hard times than good and was in desperate need of neighborhood improvement and unification. In its decline, the city had also become a magnet for refugees from around the world. Jennifer and Jamie thought that gardening would be a way for neighbors to beautify the city, to get to know one another by swapping old family recipes, and to help lower-income folks save money on their food bills.

Since it was founded, BUG had worked with neighborhood residents from some of the lowest-income neighborhoods to redevelop 21 lots across the city into community gardens. These gardens were now maintained by more than 350 residents. BUG also started and coordinated food purchasing groups where neighbors jointly bought commodities in bulk and distributed them among themselves to save money. The program was so successful, the housing authority contracted with BUG to establish food purchasing groups at three family development complexes (with promises of additional contracts once those programs were successfully launched). BUG wasn't only about gardening—it was about building community, beautifying Buffalo, and providing low-income people with access to affordable food.

During the first year of the organization's life, Jennifer and Jamie volunteered their time to organize the first four gardens. Once the city and the community foundation provided funding for BUG, Jennifer became its first staff person. Jamie, who had a full-time job as a graphic designer,

stayed on as president of the board, which also included four community gardeners—Edna Skrobowski, Vi Nguyen, Denise Brown, and Vanessa Sanford—who were joined by Sister Margaret from Blessed Sacrament and Ed Milczarek, a recently retired parks and recreation employee.

As BUG grew, it hired a few more staff: Manny Lopez and Willie Smith as community organizers/garden coordinators and Deb Horwitz as coordinator of the food purchasing groups. MJ Schumann was the part-time bookkeeper. Jennifer's time was spent coordinating the activities of the group, interacting with city agencies, and fund-raising. She was known throughout the city for her effervescent smile, ingenuity, and dedication to the mission of BUG. She and Jamie had been dating when they launched BUG, but he soon realized that Jennifer would always be more committed to her work than she could ever be to him. They were still close friends, and she still worked 70 hours per week.

The staff members loved Jennifer and loved working for BUG. Each was passionate about the mission and felt lucky to be paid to do this work. Manny and Willie were, after Jennifer, the longest standing employees, having worked there for about 2.5 years (they had been hired just a month a part). Deb had started at BUG as a student intern during her senior year at Buffalo State and was hired after her graduation, a little over a year ago, as BUG's food purchasing club coordinator. MJ worked for many nonprofits throughout the city, and he had worked at BUG for 2 years. The staff not only loved Jennifer; they were also close knit. Working at BUG felt a little like being part of a family.

One afternoon in mid-June, Jennifer got a call from Willie. He was sobbing so hard she initially had a difficult time understanding what he was saying to her, "L'Tanya was hit by a drunk driver. I've got to go to the hospital now." "Go," she said. "I'll meet you there." L'Tanya was Willie's wife of 10 years, the love of his life, his high school sweetheart. They married right before he left to fight in the Iraq war. They had an 8-year-old son, Willie, Jr. By the time Willie arrived at the hospital, she was dead.

Everyone at BUG was devastated. Manny spread the word to community gardeners across the city, and many came to the funeral to express their condolences. Jennifer called an emergency meeting of the board to talk about bereavement leave for Willie as there was no provision for bereavement leave in the personnel policies, and she did not want to make the decision by herself.

Sister Margaret spoke first. "As a caring community, we must give Willie a month off with pay. This is a devastating loss, and he will need time to begin to heal and rebuild his life with Willie, Jr." Denise and Vanessa nodded in agreement. "Sister," replied Ed, "I appreciate your compassion, but I know the city only allows 3 days of paid leave for bereavement, which I think is a pretty standard practice for most businesses. I can only imagine what Willie is going through right now, but I don't see how BUG can afford to give him that much paid leave. Who's going to fill in for him while he's out in the middle of our busiest season? We can't ask Manny to do the work of two people."

"I know it's much more than most organizations do or would be willing to do," said Jamie, "but BUG isn't most organizations. We are about building community and loving our neighbors. I'm willing to take 2 weeks off work to fill in for Willie. I know I won't do as good a job as he does—I'm no gardening expert—but at least I'm a familiar face to many folks in the neighborhood." "Thank you," sighed Jennifer, "that really means a lot to me that you're willing to do that for Willie and for BUG." "All right," said Ed. "I'll volunteer for a week myself if we agree to give him 3 weeks and 3 days off in total." And so it was decided to give Willie 3 weeks and 3 days of paid leave.

During Willie's leave of absence, Manny worked extra hours to coordinate Jamie and Ed's efforts and to fill in the gaps as best he could. It wasn't anything like having Willie around, but Manny felt that he needed to do everything in his power to help his buddy. Even though he was dog tired from the extra work, he stopped by Willie's house a few times a week to check in on him and Junior and to fill Willie in on what was happening at the gardens. Willie's mother and father were often there, watching Junior. Willie looked like an empty shell of himself.

Two weeks after Willie returned to work, he got into a shouting match with one of the gardeners. Mrs. Ahmed had never been easy to deal with; however, an issue with aphids on her summer squash escalated way too quickly into an ugliness that had Mrs. Ahmed, a petite elderly woman, running from the garden in fright. Mrs. Negash, one of the other gardeners, called Jennifer to report the incident. "I'm so sorry, Mrs. Negash. I will speak to Willie and come to the garden myself to apologize to Mrs. Ahmed."

That incident was the first of many to follow. Nearly every day for the next 5 weeks Jennifer got calls from gardeners who were on the receiving end of Willie's wrath. Manny tried his best to intervene when he could, but he was often working across town at another site. He was carrying more than his share of the workload, maintaining half of the existing gardens and organizing three new sites. He told Jennifer that word was spreading among the gardeners about Willie's behavior, and that there was widespread fear in the community.

Jennifer met with Willie on a weekly basis to talk it through with him. "Willie, this can't keep happening, and I know you don't want it to keep happening. The gardeners are afraid of you, and the staff is becoming afraid of you, too." When she said this, Jennifer thought of Deb, who had expressed fear of Willie's outbursts, which had happened in the office as well. Angry about something, one day he had thrown a chair across the room.

"I know that losing L'Tayna was devastating—I can't imagine," said Jennifer, with tears in her eyes. "But you desperately need professional help. We can't have you out in the community acting like this." Willie hung his head, apologized, and yet his behavior continued. Manny talked to him, too, both at work and at his house, but Willie's behavior did not change. Jennifer was beside herself. She loved Willie, yet she could not stand by and watch him destroy BUG's good work in the community.

Case Questions

1. What should Jennifer do now?
 - a. What are the ethical and legal choices she faces?
 - i. Should she put Willie on probation? If so, what are the steps to doing so?
 - ii. Can she mandate Willie attend counseling?
 - iii. Can, and should, she fire Willie? If she should fire Willie, on what grounds?
 - iv. What kinds of policies can an organization put into place to address emergency leave?
 - v. What kinds of policies can an organization put into place to address issues pertaining to employee conduct?

2. What actions should Jennifer take regarding BUG's relationship with the community gardeners?
3. Should Jennifer discuss this matter with the board and involve them in her decision about how to handle the situation? Why, or why not?
4. What policy changes, if any, should BUG make?
5. What are the ethical dimensions of smaller nonprofits implementing flexible employment policies?

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CASE 6.2

EMPLOYEE SUBSTANCE ABUSE: THE UNEXPECTED TRUTH

It was a winter for the record books. The snow started to fall well before Thanksgiving, and by early February, it seemed like it would never stop. Cold and snow were second nature to everyone in the Tri-City area, but this winter's weather had been punishingly cruel. As a result, the strain on the Tri-City Community Action Agency's Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) was extreme. The agency was deluged by a never-ending parade of stress and anxiety in the form of applicants who were desperate for funding to heat their homes. The stories they shared with the case managers were almost unimaginably sad as low-income families, the elderly, and disabled struggled to make impossible choices between food, rent, and fuel.

Soledad (Sol) Delgado thought she was prepared to handle the pressure when she accepted the job the previous summer as program director for Tri-City's LIHEAP as well as its weatherization unit (the latter provided free energy insulation and weather stripping to income-eligible households). A newly minted social worker with a graduate degree, she had worked previously in more junior management roles at other human service agencies. This was a major promotion for her (she had been featured in the university's alumni magazine) and one that she was eager to take on.

During her first day on the job, she was introduced to her deputy managers, Jack Marcum and Eileen Kaufman. Jack had been with the agency for almost 2 decades and was an expert on LIHEAP. He had applied for Sol's job but was not offered it because he did not have a college degree. He was, nevertheless, extremely gracious and welcoming to Sol. Eileen had been with Tri-City for 11 years. She was hospitable to Sol yet also came across as being slightly aloof. She looked tense and had a constant habit of chewing mints.

Jack and Eileen were in lateral roles, where he had primary responsibility for directly supervising the work of the weatherization teams, while she had primary responsibility for overseeing the LIHEAP intake operations and application processing. It was clear that Jack and Eileen were dedicated to doing all they could to meet the needs of Tri-City's clients.

They were compassionate, well-organized, respected by the staff they supervised, and professional in their approach to the job.

Jack and Eileen were both significantly older than Sol (he was old enough to be her father). Regardless of this age difference, they treated her with the utmost respect and were eager to talk through and adopt the suggestions she made for streamlining how the waiting room functioned and how applications were processed. She also worked with them on developing a new plan for strengthening the outreach activities of both programs to ensure that those most in need, such as homebound seniors and disabled residents, were reached. Sol had tremendous appreciation for their skills and experience; however, she recognized that she would have to work on getting each of them up-to-speed on their computer skills as both preferred and were in the habit of recording things in a handwritten notebook before typing their reports into a computer. They insisted they were more comfortable ensuring the accuracy of their numbers using this technique. Given the pressure of the winter months, Sol felt this was something she could tackle with them during the spring and summer.

Sol was intimidated by her direct supervisor, the agency's associate director, Kyle McKinley, who was a retired military commander. He had been with Tri-City for several years and worked closely with the agency's CEO and board. Kyle rarely cracked a smile, requested twice monthly reports on the metrics of both the LIHEAP and weatherization programs, and, when she performed well, simply told Sol that she was meeting his expectations. Sol worked long hours. She was proud of her work and emotionally exhausted by the sense of responsibility she felt toward the clients.

One day when Eileen was out of the office, Kyle requested that Sol immediately bring him a report on the month-to-date LIHEAP numbers. He was scheduled to have a telephone conference that afternoon with the secretary of the state human service agency about the possibility of the state providing emergency funding to support the LIHEAP program when the federal money ran out. Kyle had been keeping a careful eye on Tri-City's LIHEAP allocation and knew that it was likely that the agency would burn through its money sometime within the next few weeks.

Sol asked Mary O'Connor, the department's executive assistant, when Eileen would be back in the office. She was told that Eileen was

scheduled to be gone for several hours. Sol then frantically called Eileen's cell phone, which went repeatedly to voice mail. She sent Eileen several text messages, which also went unanswered. In a panic after not being able to reach Eileen for 40 minutes, Sol asked Mary if she knew where Eileen kept her notebook. Mary shrugged and suggested that Sol look through Eileen's desk.

Conscious of the ticking clock, Sol began searching through the Eileen's desk. There were neat piles on top, although none contained the notebook. She then began searching through her desk drawers. When she opened the file drawer on the lower right-hand side, her mouth dropped open: in it was a half-gallon bottle of Vodka that was nearly empty. The mouth of the bottle was smeared with Eileen's lipstick. Suddenly, she understood why Eileen was constantly chewing mints. It all made sense.

Case Questions

1. Describe the ethical dilemmas present in this case.
2. What are the legal rules in your state for treating employees with substance abuse problems?
3. Did Sol have the legal right to search Eileen's desk?
4. What should Sol's next steps be?
5. What actions can a supervisor take, if any, to create a climate of trust between herself and her employees?

CASE 6.3

VOLUNTEERS IGNORING THE RULES: THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME

Joe Bearpaw had everything going for him. He was distinctively handsome with high cheekbones and a regal nose inherited from his Cherokee ancestors, charming, and smart, having graduated near the top of his law school class. He always had a broad smile, an outstretched hand, and enough energy for two people. Before enrolling in law school, Joe had been a case manager at the Stillwater Homeless Shelter for 5 years. Once he graduated and found his footing with a commercial real estate practice, he joined the board of Stillwater.

Joe and his wife, Patty, were active volunteers at the shelter, serving meals nearly every weekend and spending time with some of the families that temporarily called Stillwater home. Joe used his bar association contacts to secure pro bono representation for Stillwater clients in need of legal assistance and twisted the arms of many colleagues to donate to the agency. He took it upon himself to raise a significant amount of money for the organization to which he added a large check from his personal funds.

Volunteering at Stillwater was an important part of Joe and Patty's lives. They both felt called to help those who were less fortunate. In fact, when Joe joined the board, he said to Tom Hartfield, the executive director, "You know I'll do anything to help Stillwater, Tom, but I don't want to become just a figurehead, fund-raiser, or paper pusher. Both Patty and I want to be engaged on an ongoing basis with the families."

The staff members of Stillwater were less enthusiastic about the couple's volunteerism. While they appreciated the time and caring the Bearpaws dedicated to the clients, the staff members felt like they couldn't set boundaries on Joe and Patty's volunteer efforts in the same way they could with other volunteers. After all, Joe carried the power of the board. The staff whispered among each other that even though Joe had done the same job in the past that rule changes since then had left him out of touch with many of the current protocols that the Stillwater higher-ups required them to follow. They feared saying anything to either Joe or Patty about these issues for fear that Tom would be upset with them for being disrespectful to a board member and important fund-raiser.

One winter, Joe and Patty found themselves in ongoing conversations with a troubled mother and her two children. The mother, Ryann, had struggled with alcohol and substance abuse and, as a result, had lost her job and apartment. The three had lived on the street for almost a year with all of their belongings stuffed into two backpacks until they managed to find their way to Stillwater through the help of a street outreach worker. Throughout it all, Brianne, Ryann's daughter, managed to stay enrolled in high school and took on the caretaker role for her younger brother, Malcom. Her relationship with a trusted cafeteria worker kept her and Malcom from starving.

Each afternoon before 5 p.m., the family lined up with others outside of Stillwater hoping the shelter could offer them a warm, safe place to spend the night. They had been coming there steadily for almost 2 months (families were allowed to stay for 90 days as long as they made progress toward work and savings goals and remained free of alcohol and drugs). Ryann told them she was clean now and used the shelter's job search services to get back on her feet. She had landed some part-time work cleaning motel rooms, had filed for Section 8 housing assistance, and was doing her best to save what little money she had for a down payment on rent for a studio apartment. Stillwater had a matching funds program and would help her with the deposit if she were able to come up with the rent during her 90-day stay at the shelter.

Brianne was 15 and full of anger at her mother. She was angry at not having a permanent place to stay, angry at not having any new clothes that hadn't already been worn by someone else, angry that she had to pack up all of her things every day and hide them in a locker at school, angry she had no privacy, angry she could never sleep past 6 a.m., and angry that she had to watch her little brother, Malcom, after school (he was 5) rather than hang out with her friends and act like a normal kid. She was embarrassed by her mother and ashamed that they lived at Stillwater. She also feared living back on the streets. She couldn't understand why Joe and Patty were so nice to her mother. She thought they treated her mother like she was a responsible adult when Brianne knew that she was just a loser drug addict.

Joe and Patty coached Ryann on how to keep a job and tried to encourage her when she was down. Ryann always thanked them profusely for their help, told them how ashamed she was that she had gotten herself and the

kids into this mess, and promised that she would claw her way out of it. Even though it was outside of the rules, Joe was in regular touch with the building management company at his workplace, hoping to find a full-time cleaning job for Ryann. Patty did the same in the building where she worked. They would say to their friends, "It's one thing for an adult to mess up her life with alcohol and drugs; it's something altogether different when she's got two kids that are innocent victims. We want to do everything we can to help this woman for the sake of her children." They agreed between them that they would supplement Ryann's saving account at Stillwater if she couldn't reach the amount required for the match at the end of her 90-day stay.

One weekend, just as Joe and Patty were arriving at Stillwater, they saw Ryann, Brianne, and Malcom on the street. Ryann was sobbing; Brianne looked furious, while Malcom sucked his thumb and looked scared. "What happened?" asked Patty. Brianne responded. "They wouldn't let us in because my stupid mother was partying all afternoon with her druggie friends." "That's not true," sobbed Ryann. "I just had one little drink. I'm a grown woman. I've been working so hard these past few months to keep it all together. I just needed a little comfort, that's all. I'm sorry, baby. Mommy messed up. I promise it won't happen again." "Right," said Brianne.

Joe and Patty looked at each other. The temperature was in the low 40s and dropping. "Where will you go?" asked Joe. Ryann just shrugged through her tears. "Look," said Joe, "we want you to come to our apartment to stay for the next day or so until we can get this situation straightened out with the staff. I know they are very strict about readmitting someone who breaks the rules, and that they have a firm one-strike rule about drinking and drug use, but I'm on the board, so I think that maybe they'll make an exception in your case if I talk directly to Tom." With that, the family piled themselves and their meager belongings into Joe's car and headed for his and Patty's apartment. In the confines of the car, Joe and Patty could smell the strong odor of liquor on Ryann's breath.

Once inside the apartment, Patty showed them to the guest bedroom. It was a large, beautiful room with a queen bed and a luxurious adjacent bathroom. There was a flat-screen TV on the wall above a dresser. She apologized that the family would have to share a bed and pulled out

a stack of fluffy towels. "Please feel free to settle in and make yourselves comfortable. Since we weren't expecting you, I'll talk to Joe about ordering out for Chinese food. Would you like that?" said Patty. They nodded almost in unison. "That would be very nice, Mrs. Bearpaw" said Ryann. After she closed the door, Brianne said in a whisper, "Wow, this place is like something out of a magazine. They must be rich."

Down the hallway and out of earshot of the family, Patty whispered to Joe, "Are you sure you know what you're doing? What if Tom won't take them back? Then what?" "Don't worry," he said. "I've known Tom for over a dozen years. He's a good guy, I'm on the board, and I raise a lot of money for them. I'll give him a call after dinner."

Case Questions

1. If you were Tom, what would you do when you received Joe's phone call to take the family back?
2. What policies, if any, should be in place to distinguish board members from other volunteers?
3. What policies, if any, should be in place to distinguish donor-volunteers from other volunteers?
4. What could Stillwater have done, if anything, to prevent this type of situation from occurring?
5. What volunteer management policies and codes of conduct would you recommend be adopted by nonprofit organizations?

CASE 6.4

WHEN VOLUNTEERS RUN AMOK: NEEDLING THE PRESS

Angie Fong held her head in her hands. She had no idea how something as simple as a beach cleanup could have morphed into something so wrong that it now jeopardized her long-standing relationship with City Councilman Dan Melgoza. She had worked hard to build a positive reputation for Coast First and now wasn't sure how it could recover from this debacle.

Coast First was an 8-year-old organization that was founded with the simple straightforward mission of protecting the coastline. Its work was carried out through three main areas: advocacy for clean oceans and beaches that protect the health of people and sea life, environmental education to ensure current and future generations understand the value of the ocean, and community outreach to engage people of all ages in this important work.

In its early years, Coast First was an all-volunteer organization that made its mark by successfully advocating for the state to establish a system of regularly testing the quality of ocean waters along the entire coastline in order to protect beachgoers from pollution-related illnesses. It was a simple idea born out of a rash of illnesses experienced by beachgoers (among them Angie and her family) that brought almost immediate respect and visibility to the fledgling organization. Soon after, Coast First launched a twice yearly volunteer beach cleanup that had grown over the years from 200 volunteers to almost 20,000 people across the state. Coast First's educational programs for students in Grades 1 through 3 were launched 4 years later in collaboration with the local school district. It had recently produced a well-respected environmental curriculum for Grades 6 through 8 that was being considered by many school districts throughout the state.

Grant money from the city, state, and private foundations along with organizational memberships and general donations had allowed Coast First to expand its staff over the years to encompass a small team of four that was led by Angie. These included a scientist-advocate, an attorney, a director of instruction, and an education specialist. The staff

worked long hours, without complaint, for low pay and felt privileged to be working for such a noble cause.

Because it was such a lean operation, volunteers were vital to the organization's efforts. Volunteers were active in a variety of roles that included, for example, working alongside public officials to monitor water conditions, creating materials for advocacy campaigns and mobilizing the Coast First network to weigh in with their elected officials on pending legislation, serving as instructional aids in schools using the Coast First curriculum, and organizing beach cleanups throughout the state (the largest of which occurred closest to the Coast First small headquarters). The Coast First offices were always a beehive of activity; walking in one would never guess that the organization had only five paid staff.

The largest semiannual beach cleanup was headed by Leslie Hennessey, a retired police officer. Leslie was extremely organized: she orchestrated the event by assigning five volunteers to be lieutenants who each handled a separate area of the beach and a separate crew of volunteers. The lieutenants—all but one of whom had served in this volunteer capacity previously—had instructions about how to sort through the found materials (by organic and inorganic matter, of which hazardous material was a subcategory). They were provided with special t-shirts that signified they were lead volunteers, instruction sheets for training volunteers in the handling of the materials, as well as ample plastic bags and gloves, hand sanitizer, and sunscreen.

The event provided public officials with an excellent press opportunity. Dan Melzoga, the city councilman who represented the district in which the beach was located, played a prominent role in greeting the volunteers and formally kicking off the event. Dan had been a founding board member of Coast First, and it was not coincidental that he originally ran for his city council seat on an environmental platform. He made sure that Coast First received a large annual block grant and had helped the organization negotiate its education program contract with the school district where he had many friends. Dan was planning to announce his intention to run for mayor the following week and saw a natural constituency of potential voters among the Coast First volunteers. This was important since he was known for pushing through legislation that was left of center and more controversial than what was supported by the current mayor.

The day was blustery yet sunny as hundreds of volunteers fanned out across the enormous expanse of beach to begin their work. This particular cleanup took place each July 5 with volunteers stepping up to the task of reclaiming the beach from hordes of partygoers who always seemed to leave a trail of trash behind. The usual array of TV cameras came to record the event. It was a classic shot of the community in action with dots of people spread across miles of sand doing public good.

Everything was proceeding as planned until a volunteer was tapped for an interview by News 8. "Tell me," said Amy Millis, holding a microphone up to Robert Burger, a volunteer, "what brings you here today, and what kind of trash are you finding?" "I'm here," replied Robert, "because I believe that we need to keep the beaches safe for our families. I've been volunteering for this cleanup for years, but I've never seen so many hypodermic needles as what I've seen today. It's got to be because the city passed that needle exchange program. It's ruining our beach, and it's endangering our kids. What if one of them got stuck with one of those needles? If the city does stupid things and won't protect us, we citizens have to protect ourselves."

With that, the story ceased to be about the work of Coast First and became focused on the needle exchange program that had been pushed through on a controversial 5-4 vote by none other than Dan Melgoza. All of the TV stations picked up the story and ran the clip on their teaser for the evening news. A reporter from *The Herald* contacted Robert for a more in-depth interview and posted the story at the top fold of the morning paper; it was a headline in the online version.

Dan called Angie in a rage. "What the hell, Angie? With all that I've done for you, you can't figure out a way to control your volunteers? Do you know who that Robert Burger is? He's a so-called citizen activist who has been trying to torpedo the needle exchange program since before it started. He just used the cleanup as an excuse to bash me in the press."

"I'm so sorry," lamented Angie. "I had no idea. Not only did he bash you; he also took away the positive momentum we needed from the event. We always attract a lot of donors after these cleanups, and now I'm afraid that no one will be paying attention to us because they'll be focused on . . . other things." "I realize that," said Dan. "And I also realize that when it comes time to advocate for funding for Coast First that

I may have to be focused on other things as well.” With that, he hung up the phone.

Case Questions

1. What are the benefits and risks that nonprofit organizations encounter when they engage with volunteers?
2. What types of safeguards can nonprofits put into place to mitigate the risks you outlined?
3. When, if ever, is it necessary for a nonprofit to have a professional volunteer manager on staff?
4. What basic policies and procedures should nonprofits have in place to handle volunteers? Is it realistic for a nonprofit to prohibit volunteers from speaking to the press?