

## Weathering the Economic Storm

By Angela Newman  
Board Chair, Nashville RBI

Nashville RBI is Nashville's chapter of Reviving Baseball in the Inner cities, an MLB sponsored organization. 2008, was one of the best years in the 12 years of Nashville RBI's history. The best in many ways; active board member participation, numerous media articles printed, large financial donations, a golf tournament with the most participants and sponsors, and a wine tasting event with incredible auction items and attendance. By comparison, with the first quarter of 2009 and our 13<sup>th</sup> annual golf tournament just ahead of us, we are seeing fewer volunteers on the golf committee, fewer sponsors for the event, and fewer teams signing up to play.

We were hoping 2009 would bring the funds to lease a building near the ballpark to house the start of a baseball academy; providing a place for inner city kids to not only play baseball when in season, but to do their homework after school and keep them off the streets and out of trouble. We hoped to have speakers from the Nashville community come in on a monthly basis and share their knowledge, their careers and speak on topics such as being successful in life. The goal is to have these prominent leaders encourage kids to not only focus on a career but develop as responsible and respectable citizens.

Fortunately our individual donors have been very generous this year and it is still too early to tell if we will be affected later in the year if the economy does not improve. Where we are seeing an impact on our donations is in the largest fundraiser we have each year, the RBI Golf Classic. Our corporate sponsor contributions for the event are 25% of last year's and attendance to date is substantially less although we are still several weeks away from the event so I am hopeful.

Clearly the state of the current economy is impacting our non-profit. We have had to make some changes in running the organization as well as to the golf classic due to the downturn of the economy. We continue to keep an eye on things very closely to ensure our purpose of existence is not affected. As with any non-profit right now, cutting back on some expenses, putting lower priority projects on hold temporarily and looking at creative ways to accomplish our needs including thinking outside of the box are ways in which we hope to weather the economic storm.

Some simple but needed changes we have made for 2009 are:

- ☞ The dinner following the golf classic will be scaled down from years past.
- ☞ More emphasis is being placed on getting \$1000 sponsors for the event and filling up golf teams and less emphasis placed on large corporate sponsors.
- ☞ Creative selling tactics to place teams; phone a ton's to successful businesses in the area asking for their support by registering a team in the event and/or asking for auction item donations.
- ☞ The desire to lease a building to house children after school will not take place this year. Instead the board came up with an alternate way to still work toward

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achieving our goal of educating kids. We will look at partnering with the City of Nashville to use the community centers around the city free of charge for our monthly educational programs.

- ☞ We are looking at a program that would provide RBI with additional and different funds in addition to the traditional fundraisers and local businesses to support the organization.
- ☞ Emphasis on grassroots efforts and quantity of donors with smaller contributions as opposed to larger donations by fewer people and organizations.

If your non-profit organization is facing similar changes to your revenue due to the economic downturn, brainstorm at your next board meeting to find creative ways to weather the economic storm.

*Angela Newman, CEO of Pink Ladders ([www.pinkladders.com](http://www.pinkladders.com)) currently holds a leadership position in the healthcare industry where she has over 20 years experience. She also volunteers for Nashville RBI ([www.NashvilleRBI.com](http://www.NashvilleRBI.com)) as Board Chair. She is an avid baseball fan (NY Yankees) and makes her charitable organization a priority in her life. She also holds a Master's Degree in Business Administration.*

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