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Hancock helps Generations Inc. learn to 'fish' for itself

BY ROBERTA HOLLAND
SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL

John Hancock Financial Services' Carol Fulp believes in the adage that if you teach a person to fish, you feed him for a lifetime.

So when the nonprofit **Generations Inc.** asked her for a \$10,000 operations grant, Fulp instead arranged for a consultant to teach the group how to build its donor base and raise its profile.

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"Quite frankly, it's easy to give a check," said Fulp, vice president of community relations for John Hancock. "But what we were trying to do is to really move this organization, which we think is a real jewel, to the next level."

The company's \$10,000 donation for consulting services enabled Generations to hire well-known strategic consultant **Arlene Fortunato**. She is working with the nonprofit through the spring, teaching its leaders how to better leverage existing connections and make new ones as well.

Launched in 1991, Generations trains volunteers aged 55 or older to work in Boston public schools. About 350 volunteers tutor children individually twice a week in an effort to boost literacy. Last



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John Hancock Financial Services Vice President of Community Relations Carol Fulp, left, meets with Arlene Fortunato, CEO of Fortunato Consulting Group, and Tara Finnegan, the director of resource development for Generations Inc. Hancock hired Fortunato to assist Generations with its long-term fundraising strategies.

year those volunteers, aided by fellow volunteers from the AmeriCorps VISTA program, contributed 70,000 tutoring hours to Boston schoolchildren. It is now seeking volunteers for its planned expansion into Revere.

Mary Gunn, executive director of Generations, said she was struck by how quickly Fulp was able to change her request into an initiative that will benefit

the nonprofit for the long term. Board member **Karen Morton**, also a friend of Fulp's, arranged the introduction.

"She's teaching us to fish," Gunn said.

While the nonprofit has assumed some of the costs associated with Fortunato's services, Gunn said there is no way the group could have hired a consultant without Hancock's assistance.

"We'll be better positioned after this consultancy ends to go out and do this on our own," Gunn said.

Fortunato will wrap up her contract by assisting with a high-profile fundraiser. The target: \$100,000 in donations. "I just know this piece of work we're doing right now will stay with us for many, many years," Gunn said.

Fulp has used the same approach, as well as with consultants such as Fortunato, before.

Often nonprofits are so busy providing services that they don't have enough time to work on development, she said.

Fulp, whose company was hit with 1,000 requests for donations last year alone, said she liked the fact that Generations works directly in Boston public schools, a longtime partner of John Hancock's. She also was drawn to the way the program matches retiring baby boomers with city youth.

"This is a great model," Fulp said. "You're going to have a huge resource of individuals who will be available to work with our young people."

Raising the nonprofit's visibility is crucial given the fierce competition for corporate donations and economic challenges present today, Fulp added. "It's unique and a story that should be told," Fulp said.