

CAREERS | Fulfillment can be found in public service, KC author says

WANTED: JOBS WITH MEANING



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Jamie Roach (left) is just the kind of young person Shelly Cryer (right) wants to reach with her new book, *The Nonprofit Career Guide: How to Land a Job That Makes a Difference*. Roach, 26, is manager of major gifts at Harvesters Community Food Network.

Younger workers are showing a great interest in working in the nonprofit sector.

By LISA GUTIERREZ
The Kansas City Star

In her first job as a holiday temp at Harvesters Community Food Network five years ago, Jamie Roach entered donations of food into a computer database and sent thank you letters.

Now she's writing grants and raising money for the food bank as its manager

of major gifts.

Roach is only 26, but she expects to spend the rest of her career in the nonprofit world. And that made her one of the young people Shelly Cryer really wanted to get her hands on.

Cryer's new book is *The Nonprofit Career Guide: How to Land a Job That Makes a Difference*.

She's playing matchmaker. Roach's generation, by many accounts, is showing big interest in nonprofit jobs, a response, some think, to the tragedies of both Sept. 11, 2001, and Hurricane Katrina.

That's heartening news as nonprofits

are hit with higher-than-ever turnover rates as older managers and leaders retire, creating a high demand for the next generation -- Roach's generation -- to step in, and up.

"I am trying to educate and inspire new, young professionals who are interested in public service to choose nonprofit sector careers," Cryer says.

Roach says Cryer is on to something.

"I think a lot of people my age are looking for a career that is meaningful, that is perhaps more than just climbing the corporate ladder or working their way up," says Roach, who is profiled in the book.

NONPROFITS: Paying mortgage is possible, manager says

A wide range

The scope of the sector and diversity of its jobs stunned Cryer as she spent two years working on the book.

The 1.4 million nonprofit organizations in the country range vastly in size and services.

The simplest definition of a nonprofit is that it doesn't pay taxes and any gifts to it are tax-deductible. The government considers nonprofits "public charities." Cryer calls them mission-driven. Most arts, education, health-care and human services groups fall into the category.

The nonprofit world, Cryer says, "is not just a place to go to volunteer. There are adequately paying jobs that can lead to a life."

Cryer, who grew up in Connecticut, spent more than 16 years working in nonprofit jobs before marrying Kansas City Symphony music director Michael Stern and giving birth to their now-toddler daughter.

As a researcher and consultant designing media and public education campaigns for nonprofits, "my clients were a lot of mid-sized groups that didn't have a human resources person, that had a lot of trouble finding staff and had internships that were not well-run," she says. "Everyone was saying, 'Leadership and diversity is important, but we can't do it.'"

She saw the dilemma from the students' point of view when she started teaching at Columbia University in the fall of 1999.

"Young people believe deeply in the nonprofit sector, but even those who dream of a career in public service struggle to connect to great jobs," she says.

"And nonprofit leaders recognize that their employees are their most

precious resource but often have inadequate resources to recruit and retain the talent they need."

'Do good and do well'

In 2004 Cryer teamed up with American Humanics in Kansas City to continue working on her initiative to find and develop talent for the nonprofit world. Her task dovetailed with the mission of the 60-year-old Kansas City organization, and since then, she and her family have split their time between homes here and in New York.

As a new generation of young people search for jobs that make a difference and are meaningful, Cryer's book leads them step-by-step.

Kevin Shaffstall runs the American Humanics program at William Jewell College in Liberty, through which students become certified in nonprofit leadership. The program started with four students in 2001; 65 are currently enrolled.

"We often talk about how our students can do good and do well," Shaffstall says. "I think within the nonprofits, career development has not been something that's been well-defined. I think Shelly's book and the work Shelly is doing speaks to that."

As she interviewed college career counselors, Cryer was surprised by their honesty in saying they feel better equipped to steer students to business jobs rather than nonprofit ones.

Large corporate employers do indeed have a leg up when it comes to recruiting the best and brightest from college campuses, says Kerri Day Keller, director of career and employment services at Kansas State University. She, too, is featured in Cryer's book.

"Nonprofit organizations can't send a

whole team of people to a campus to recruit. They don't have the glitzy brochures," Keller says.

"Corporate employers have money, generally speaking, to spend on recruiting on campus. They often have a lot of brand recognition from their products and services already. So it's often quite challenging in career services to figure out how we can level the playing field a little bit."

K-State's move in that direction came in a workshop that introduced students to people working in the nonprofit world, and "A Common Good" career fair featuring employers from the nonprofit and government sectors.

Good salaries, or lack thereof, can't be ignored when talking about nonprofit jobs, Keller says. Larger organizations naturally pay higher salaries.

Cryer cites median salaries of \$29,981 in organizations with budgets of less than \$250,000, and \$47,967 in groups with budgets of \$250,001 to \$500,000.

"When we have students coming out with significant debt ... that is certainly weighing on their mind," Keller says. "And when they're faced with a corporate job that pays 'X' amount, they've got a difficult decision to make."

Cryer counters that by saying nonprofits are doing a better job of offering incentives other than salary, perks such as flex-time, job-sharing and turning jobs that traditionally have been volunteer positions into paid posts with management potential.

And Jamie Roach would argue that you can work at a nonprofit job and pay the mortgage.

Contrary to her family's warning that "you're not going to get paid anything," the Harvesters manager just bought a town house in the Northland.

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*preparing next generation
nonprofit sector leaders for
sixty years*

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