Going Live
Web site launched to help Massachusetts nonprofits

With the launch of www.massnonprofit.org in late March, Massachusetts organizations now have a Web resource designed specifically for in-state nonprofits. The site includes news reports, organizational profiles and "expert advice" addressing issues as diverse as working with boards, marketing and public relations and fundraising.

The focus is not so much on what nonprofits are doing but the process in which they accomplish their mission. The site's tagline is, Inform. Share. Thrive.

"One out of every seven people employed in the state are employed by nonprofits," said Peter Lowy, the Web site's publisher. "The fact that there are over 25,000 nonprofit organizations in Massachusetts suggests that there is a lot of news out there. Many of them have an operating budget of under a quarter of a million dollars — so they're small. After reading a report that detailed how much work nonprofits were doing in the area...I thought this was a good opportunity to produce an online publication."

The site was designed after Lowy attempted to submit a nonprofit-related article and found very little opportunity with established media outlets. A number of area newspapers just didn't have the space to devote to nonprofit issues, Lowy said.

As a result, he established massnonprofit.org, which relies on state-based nonprofits to generate news. Organizations can email the site with the news they would like posted, although not every request is met. News items must serve some type of benefit to other nonprofits, Lowy added.

The staff consists of Lowy and one editor. The goal is to have revenue pay for the cost of the site.

"Right now I call (the site) an 'unprofit' venture because it's just costing me money," Lowy said. "It is officially a sole proprietorship. We are selling ads on it — we're taking job ads and banner ads — there's a services directory."

Growth is going to depend on nonprofits' involvement with the site. Lowy is currently reaching out to any and all nonprofits to drum up attention. Thus far the site has not had a problem getting organizations to send in news-worthy items. Lowy also sends out a weekly Wednesday Report, an email summary to alert readers to content posted on the site. The Weekly Report is not pushed out to people but is available via an opt-in basis. In the first three weeks of operation the site had captured over 200 email addresses, Lowy said. DRFE