Coffey to step down as CEO of Center for Nonprofit Excellence

Center expanded program offerings and served record number of people during her tenure, search committee for new leader now being formed

Feb. 6, 2023 (Louisville, KY) – Ann Coffey has announced she is stepping down as CEO of CNPE, effective July 31. Coffey will have served the organization for five years, including a year as interim CEO. During her tenure, the organization expanded program offerings – even during the pandemic, when all in-person classes and events had to be halted suddenly.

“We could not have imagined in those early weeks that by expanding online class offerings we would actually serve a record number of people in 2020 and 2021,” Coffey said. “Most importantly, we have magnified the importance and impact of the nonprofit sector. Very soon, we will be presenting the first State of the Sector report since 2016 that showcases the significant economic impact of nonprofits.”

The Center for Nonprofit Excellence was founded in 1999 to provide professional development opportunities for nonprofits in Louisville, Southern Indiana, and surrounding counties. Ann is the organization’s third leader.

“CNPE is the ‘go-to place’ for nonprofits and we like to say that we ‘help nonprofits do good, better,’” said Coffey. “Our classes help organizations work more effectively and efficiently – which means they can do more with the support they receive from foundations, corporate, or individual donors.”

With the tagline “we all profit when nonprofits thrive,” CNPE has helped nonprofit social impact organizations expand capacity by providing training opportunities in fundraising, nonprofit management, board development, and advocacy. In addition to the classes, CNPE also offers an experienced group of consultants who work with organizations on strategic and operational planning, increasing board effectiveness, developing program outcome measurements, organizational and governance, and general organizational development. CNPE’s roster of upcoming classes – both in-person and virtual – is available here.

Coffey was hired as interim CEO in the summer of 2018 while the organization was searching for a new leader. During that time, she had become so invested in CNPE’s mission and the Board’s new vision of CNPE that she agreed to become permanent CEO in September of 2019.
“I’ve worked most of my career in the nonprofit and public sectors, and this has been a very rewarding experience for me, helping guide CNPE toward a more robust future,” she said. “Now the organization is at an inflection point and is ready take the next step in creating a new strategic plan beginning in late 2023. By stepping down now, I’m hoping CNPE can go through that process with the person who will be leading the organization into the future.”

Coffey said that during the next six months, she will focus on organizing the 2023 Changemakers conference next fall, fundraising and building CNPE’s sponsorship program, and launching a new Emerging Leaders program.

Coffey credits the success of CNPE to the way the staff and Board rallied around elevating CNPE’s expanded new mission. She also said the work couldn’t have been done without the support of foundations, including the James Graham Brown Foundation, the C.E.& S. Foundation, Owsley Brown II Family Foundation, Brown-Forman Foundation, Community Foundation of Louisville, Jewish Heritage Fund for Excellence, Mildred V. Horn Foundation, Humana Foundation, the Lift a Life Novak Family Foundation, The Ginkgo Fund, Kosair Charities, The Gheens Foundation, Brooke Brown Barzun Foundation – as well as our founding partners with Metro Louisville, Metro United Way, and individual and corporate sponsors.

During the past four years, CNPE:

- Held its largest ever all-day conference in 2019 with author and thought leader Dan Pallotta.
- Presented Pallotta’s BOLDER BOARD TRAINING in 2020 – which sold out almost immediately with more than 300 people
- Launched CNPE’s School for Fundraising and Engagement, which has had more than 650 students so far with a training team that is 50% people of color
- Began working with partner organizations to offer on-demand, self-paced training opportunities, in addition to the “live and local” classes it continues to host
- Developed a written racial equity and anti-racism commitment that has moved the organization to recruit, retrain, and engage more diverse instructors and board members and an intentionality to reach out to more black and brown nonprofit leaders
- Created the Community Activation Network (CAN), a diverse virtual space where more than 1,000 people representing nonprofits, donors, foundations, and activists have been able to come together since 2021 to learn and activate
- Created Nonprofit Leaders Advancing Racial Equity (NLARE), an in-depth six-month cohort program for white nonprofit leaders to ensure they have the skills, awareness, and understanding to lead and build equitable organizations
- Became the leading convener of the nonprofit and government sectors through two Mayoral Forums, the Community Activation Network (CAN), and the upcoming “Meet the Mayor” reception on February 23
- Rebranded the organization to communicate CNPE’s expanded mission
- Launched a new blog “A Bigger We” where local nonprofit leaders share their stories of how they are advancing racial equity
“One of the most important changes CNPE has made is that we put a stake in the ground and said that CNPE would be an advocate for and a convener of nonprofits in Louisville Metro and Southern Indiana,” said Board Chair Christen Boone.

Boone cited CNPE’s near daily guidance to nonprofits as they adjusted to pandemic protocols in early 2020. Later that year, as Louisville reacted to the police killing of Breonna Taylor, CNPE also began offering free, online forums for nonprofits to collaborate about addressing racism in our community.

“More recently, CNPE also convened the community for two of the city’s best-run and well-attended public mayoral forums, allowing nonprofits to put questions directly to mayor candidates,” Boone said. “Ann’s work has strengthened the voice of nonprofits in the region.”

Boone and Board Vice-chair Ashley Parrott will co-chair the search committee to identify a new CNPE leader. Details about the search process and how to apply will be shared soon.

A special thank you to CNPE program sponsors: MCM, Brown-Forman Corporation, PNC Bank, Dean Dorton, Fifth Third Bank, Baird, DMLO, Republic Bank, LG&E, Donors Forum of Kentuckiana, and Wyatt, Tarrant, & Combs.

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