

# Area a factor for Va. nonprofits

Those in N.Va. spend more per capita than others, study finds

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In Virginia, the health of the nonprofit sector can be told two ways.

There is Northern Virginia, and then there is the rest of the state.

Take, for instance, what Virginia nonprofits spend per person.

On the whole, they pay out slightly less per capita than the rest of the nation (the average is \$3,804 per capita in the United States and \$3,616 in Virginia), a new study shows.

But if you compare regions, nonprofits in Northern Virginia far outspend the rest of the state.

In 2005, the average nonprofit per capita spending in the northern part of the state was \$4,656. The rest of Virginia came in at \$2,274 that year, the latest for which figures are available.

"There are really two stories about the Virginia nonprofit sector," said Lester Salamon, director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies. "The rest of the state turns out to be well behind."

Salamon released these and other preliminary findings from his study "Virginia's Nonprofit Sector: An Economic Force" during a donors forum at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden yesterday.

The \$50,000 study was commissioned by Connect Network and The Community Foundation Serving Richmond and Central Virginia, but several area employers, foundations and nonprofits helped finance the report. The full results will be issued this summer.

The disparity between regions doesn't necessarily mean more nonprofits are needed, said Deborah Barfield Williamson, executive director of the Virginia Network of Nonprofit Organizations. Rather, it illustrates that nonprofits in Northern Virginia have larger support networks and more access to funding sources.

"We're improving the quality of life for people across the state," said Williamson, whose Richmond-based organization

provides advocacy and resources to nonprofits. It helped fund the study. "We have to be even more proactive in advocating the need for our organizations, the role they play in our community and why it is so important for them to be supported."

Salamon's report will help show the impact nonprofits — from church groups and little leagues to hospice care and musical theater — have on employment and the community because it gives concrete numbers, she said.

"The nonprofit sector in Virginia is alive and well," said Walter S. Robertson III, Community Foundation board chairman.

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