

# Your Neighbor

## Somers resident makes millions for non-profit community

*Founder Lydia Howie steps down as president of Grant Professionals of Lower Hudson*

BY BRIAN MARSCHHAUSER  
EDITOR

After nine years and \$40 million raised for local non-profit organizations, Lydia Howie, a grant-writing consultant and 27-year Somers resident, is stepping down as president of the Grant Professionals of Lower Hudson.

She founded the organization on Oct. 7, 2008, wanting to help non-profits raise the money they need to fulfill their missions and offer programming that they don't have the funds to pay for in their general operating budgets. Howie is also president of Howie Marketing & Consulting Inc. and has been a grant writer since 1999.

"I have been doubly blessed," Howie said. "Not only did God give me the talent to make a living by writing, but he has given me the opportunity to write with noble purpose. I love my non-profits, and love being able to raise money for their worthwhile missions."

Nineteen grant-writing professionals showed up for that first meeting in 2008. Today, at 115 members strong, the Grant Professionals of Lower Hudson is considered one of the county's major regional organizations that support non-profit organizations in accomplishing their missions. Members consist of grant writers working for non-profit organizations, grant writing consultants and other fundraising professionals who mostly live in Westchester, Putnam and Dutchess counties. Its website (GPLH.org) offers a variety of free resources such as grant-seeking sources.

As president, she has spoken to dozens of individuals wanting to make a career change into grant writing and started an internship program, which provides the opportunity to obtain work experi-



Lydia Howie

ence. She has helped hundreds of non profits find qualified grant writers and grant-writing consultants through their free referral service. She has kept members informed about industry trends through regular e-blasts, surveys and networking activities.

"Lydia is an enormous resource for anyone starting their own consulting business," said Treasurer Lisa Keogh. "She is one of those rare, selfless individuals who has given so incredibly much of her time and talents for not only her clients, but for her grant writing peers. Her legacy will live on for decades."

Prior to grant-writing, she had been the marketing director of Jefferson Valley Mall in Yorktown for 10 years. She said her favorite aspect of the job was helping non-profit organizations, including the launch of the Hospice Tree of Life ceremony. She has been an executive director twice for the Volunteer Center of United Way and the Association of Development Officers.

Howie was the first grant writer in Westchester to obtain her Grant Professional Certification



PHOTOS COURTESY OF LYDIA HOWIE

Teacher Jacqui Stokes and IT manager Matthew Feraco help two students at Westchester Exceptional Children's School in North Salem learn how to use their iPads. Howies helped the school secure a grant in 2012.

(the "CPA" of the grant-writing industry) and encourages her peers to study for the exam. She regularly guest speaks on grant writing and small business marketing at conferences and meetings.

One of her proudest moments came in 2012, when she raised enough money for all the disabled children at Westchester Exceptional Children's School to get their own iPad, which has improved their ability to learn.

Other top moments include: Gilda's Club Westchester winning a \$134,000 grant, which will enable them to provide psycho-social services to women with breast cancer in underserved communities throughout Westchester for five years; Teatown being able to purchase the neighboring Croft Estate, preserving 50 acres of open space; raising enough money for Cerebral Palsy of Westchester to launch a Satur-

day adaptive sports program for children who use wheelchairs and who cannot participate in their towns' weekend sports programs; and most recently, winning three sizeable state grants (\$1 million, \$500,000 and \$174,500) all in the same day, allowing the Boys & Girls Club and YMCA to both put on new roofs and Lift-Up Westchester to get a technology upgrade.

Her successes have also hit home. She had raised money for Burke Rehabilitation Hospital to purchase a TRAN-SIT Car Transfer Simulator, designed to provide a safe and convenient alternative to parking lot wheelchair-to-car transfer training sessions. Years later, her father used the "half car" to practice car transferring before being released from the hospital after a stroke.

For Howie, grant writing has been a life calling. When she retires some day, Howie said, she

intends to volunteer her writing services for a local charity to feel good, and also keep her brain sharp.

Howie says that after eight years it was time for her to "pass the baton." Her vice president, Joanne Stewart, who is a grants consultant and Cross River resident, will take the helm.

"GPLH members and the region's non-profits admire Lydia's vision, strength, creativity, generosity and grace over these past eight years," Stewart said. "We have come a long way under her leadership and guidance!"

Howie will remain on as member services chair and looks forward to the continued growth and success of her labor of love. With a committed board of directors and solid leadership in place, Howie said, "GPLH is in a great position to continue to prosper and support the region's non-profit community."