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New local nonprofit taps trend of 'involved giving'

Business Courier of Cincinnati - by [James Ritchie](#) Staff Reporter

Greater Cincinnati's affiliate of **Social Venture Partners International** doesn't yet know what it will do, but it knows how it will do it.



Paul Shoemaker

The group is based on donating not only money, but also time. It will provide nonprofits with grants and support in areas such as marketing, finance and strategic planning.

It has 12 member households now, but the group hasn't chosen a cause. At the 24 other Social Venture Partners affiliates across North America and in Japan, at-risk youth is

often a focus. The Cincinnati group hopes to choose a cause

soon, begin a grant cycle in January and make its first award in June. Initially, grants will probably be in the \$10,000 to \$25,000 range.

By its fifth year, the group would like to have 75 members and hopes to have given out \$1 million.

Becoming a member requires investing at least \$6,000 a year for three years and a commitment of time and expertise. The group continues to recruit.

Paul Shoemaker, executive director at **Social Venture Partners Seattle** and the founding president of SVP International, will be in town Nov. 8 to celebrate the launch of SVP Cincinnati.

Event Date:

November 8th

Breakfast: 8:45am to 10:00am., Metropolitan Club.

For nonprofit leaders.

Reception: 5:00pm-6:30pm., Bankers' Club.

For community leaders and prospective partners.

Keynote: Paul Shoemaker will speak at both events, both of which are free.

Information: Susan Ingmire at partners@svpcincinnati.org or (513)458-6718

He recently talked with Business Courier Reporter James Ritchie about how the group works. Excerpts follow.

Q: What makes for successful leadership in an SVP group?

People need to be in it for the right reasons. If somebody wanted to be a founder, and what they really wanted was to get people interested in their own cause and use a vehicle like SVP to get at what they want to get at, that wouldn't work. There's a level of integrity and commitment that has to be present in the leaders.

The core mission that every SVP group has is to help strengthen local nonprofits and to strengthen the individual members as civic and philanthropic leaders. The founders have to be committed to those ideas. How they adopt and carry that out, they'll figure out.

Q: What motivates people to join?

On a fundamental level, people feel a responsibility and a commitment to give back to their community. Depending on where someone is in their philanthropic development, they may join to learn, to get their feet wet.

For people who are more experienced, there's the leverage, networking and collective impact that SVP offers.

It gives some people a platform of experience, relationships and confidence that enables them to go on to other roles. We have a partner running for city council, and we have one running for school board.

Q: Why don't they join an existing group related to a cause they're already interested in?

A majority of people join SVP not because of the issue focus but because of the model: the fact that you're going to be hands-on and learn from other people, and the notion of leverage. You're looking for a situation where your money is going to do more than just be money. It's going to be a catalyst and enable a capacity-building relationship.

Q: Is there a trend toward a more involved style of giving?

There is without a doubt across America a much stronger desire to be engaged personally and directly in the work in the last 10 years. There are risks with that, of course. If people are going to be more involved, they also have to be more prepared and thoughtful.

There is something generationally different; I can't put my finger on why. We don't have enough time to stop and figure that out. We're just going to go with it.

Q: What mistakes have been made with SVP over the years?

We let a handful of SVPs get going when it just wasn't the right setup of people to lead it. They weren't ready, they didn't really understand what it was about. In most cases, people got excited about the model but didn't understand how much time it was going to take. We hadn't done enough cities to understand what did and didn't make it work. Like a lot of things, enthusiasm is necessary but not sufficient.

Q: How much control does SVP have over its local groups?

We're something that I would describe as a loose franchise. There's a legal document to be signed both ways saying they commit to doing the model. They don't get startup funds. Every city pays annual fee. We license the name and a set of tools - a member database system, knowledge management, measurement tools. And over time they get a network of people.

Q: What's your impression of the Cincinnati group?

We've been talking for a long time. They've shown diligence and commitment; they've been thoughtful in what they're doing. I'm confident that these guys aren't going to be excited for six months and then flame out.

Also, I'm impressed by the breadth in the kinds of people they have and the experiences they bring to the equation.

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