

The Young and the Charitable

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By Kathrine Schmidt,
Roll Call Staff

Edgy New York City fashion theme? Check. Retractable roof? Check. Young Washington, D.C., professionals? Check. Fundraising for a good cause? Check.

All of these elements will converge on Jan. 28 for an event that will launch a new charity organization in the D.C. metro area.

The event will be sponsored by District Trust Charities, the brainchild of Brendan Shields, currently an operations manager at the Department of Homeland Security. All proceeds will benefit Georgetown Medical Center's Lombardi Comprehensive Care center.

Shields gathered a group of friends and colleagues — largely former Capitol Hill staffers — to form an organization that would support charities by hosting fun events for young professionals.

"A lot of us were brainstorming around the fact that we wanted to do something — we weren't exactly sure what — for charity," Shields said. Once a group of approximately 10 people began discussions, he said, "we realized how easy it would be to get an event together to benefit certain organizations that are trying to help those in need."

Group members hope to harness the strong charitable impulses of their peers.

"A lot of people have a desire to be involved like this, but they don't really have the outlet or the channel," said Channing Nuss, partner at Kairos Tactical Management, a Government Relations firm based in Alexandria, Va. "We hope it gets them in, gets them engaged, and gives them some enthusiasm to do more."

No agenda will be tied to the events or causes. "There's no political bend to any of this, we're just a group of professional folks who are interested in spending some of their time for good causes," Nuss said.

"Everyone involved shares a commitment to supporting entities that provide hope and opportunities to those with various needs and challenges," reads an e-mail statement from the group.



Tom Williams/Roll Call

From left, Amy Lorenzini, Channing Nuss, Debbie Tekavec, Chris Marietta, Molly Murphy, Brendan Shields and Laura Hass have helped create District Trust Charities.

The board, which is currently comprised of 10 members, includes mainly former Hill staffers, some of whom have remained in government jobs and others who are now working in law, government relations or other professional fields.

In terms of Democrats and Republicans, Shields said, "If you look at the crowd, you'll definitely see both sides represented pretty robustly."

"I think it's unique," said Laura Haas, vice president for legislation at the D.C. law firm Brown and Co. "It's a different perspective on getting involved and getting a collective group of people together to make a difference."

A theme for future events and recipients is still in the works, Shields said, but the current priority is to "get our first event out there, create some success, and create a base of people that are interested in participating in the future.

"That'll give us the opportunity to expend in other directions," he said, "taking on new causes that were not necessarily medically related."

Shields said it helps to choose causes that the members have a "personal interaction with."

"I think that that way we might be able to bring some testimonials into the event, which is a positive effort," he said.

The event will take place at Tabaq Bistro, which donated the space for the event. It will be called "Runway" — to "bring a night of New York City here to Washington," Nuss said.

"We're in the colder winter months. We wanted to have something that created a little excitement and energy," he said. The venue "has a very modern, sleek, urban theme to it — high style."

"It's a-political fun," laughed Libbie Schlather, another board member and project manager at Fannie Mae.

A \$10 cover will be charged, and cash bar will be available. Nuss declined to offer more details on what the evening would hold.

"There will be a couple of surprises along the way," he said.

The District Trust Charities' Inaugural Benefit will be held Jan. 28 at Tabaq Bistro, 1336 U St. NW. Doors open at 10 p.m. and will close at 2:30 a.m. Cover is \$10, with proceeds benefiting Georgetown University Hospital's Lombardi Comprehensive Care Center. A Web site for the group is still in the works, but inquiries may be directed to districttrustcharitiesevents@yahoo.com.