

JOB DESCRIPTION
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
THE PROTESTANT GUILD FOR HUMAN SERVICES

The Opportunity

The Protestant Guild for Human Services (PGHS/The Guild), an established and well-respected residential school with strong programs and highly-trained professional staff, is at a critical juncture. The Board and staff seek a proven leader, with outstanding integrity and a profound belief in PGHS's mission, to steward the organization forward. This is a fantastic opportunity to build on PGHS's values and strengths, providing the strategic, tactical and collaborative leadership to move the organization into a strong and relevant future.

PGHS is a private, residential, community-based school that serves students up to age 22 with cognitive disabilities compounded by significant emotional issues, including autism. Its mission is to help its students develop to their fullest potential, enabling them to live as independently as possible. The 190 staff are dedicated and resilient, and PGHS has an excellent reputation for high-quality, student-centered services that are dynamic, integrated, multidisciplinary, and innovative. With a budget of \$12 million, funded primarily by state-supported tuition, and a healthy endowment, PGHS needs a Chief Executive Officer with an unshakable drive for excellence who can ensure its continued health and competitiveness.

Today, the organization faces multiple challenges, both externally and internally. These include transitions in Board and executive leadership, and the ability to attract students in an increasingly competitive market and volatile economy. The new CEO will have a track record of driving organizational transformation in fast-paced, multi-faceted organizations with complex programmatic and administrative demands. S/he will be results-oriented, with a strong understanding of programs and an ability to translate ideas into reality. S/he will be an innovator and an advocate with vision who can serve as an ambassador for PGHS and work with other leaders at the forefront of the educational and social services disability worlds.

Background

PGHS began in the 1940s as the Protestant Guild for the Blind, a collaboration of independent churches providing religious instruction to blind youth in the Boston area.

During the 1950s, supported by volunteers from local communities, the Guild opened offices in Boston. In 1970, the Guild sponsored a learning center for multiply disabled blind adolescents. A year later, it opened a facility in Watertown to house its offices, headquarters, and an expanded learning center, including both residential and day students. It was called The Learning Center for the Multiply Handicapped, but, as the population it served shifted to a majority of individuals with moderate mental retardation and other complicating conditions, its name was modified to The Learning Center.

PGHS was built with hard work, love, vision and discipline, and these values are reflected in the commitment and enthusiasm of staff. PGHS's vibrancy is reflected in its dynamic and supportive approach to learning. A unique organization at the cross-section of education and social services delivery, PGHS boasts high-quality, student-centered, integrated and multidisciplinary day and residential programs, collectively known as The Learning Center. PGHS's philosophy is based on the belief that all students have the right to access the services they need to help them acquire the skills and behaviors necessary to live and work as independently as possible in the community. Programs are student-driven, family-centered, community-focused, strength-based, committed to diversity and cultural competence, and dedicated to continuous learning. Students lead active lives in their neighborhoods, interacting with local banks, stores, restaurants, etc. to hone their social and interpersonal skills. Through this immersion in the community, students have the opportunity to demonstrate newly acquired abilities and learn to manage behaviors and use skills that will serve them today and after they graduate.

The Learning Center's unique curriculum spans traditional academic disciplines, such as social studies and science, as well as community safety, social skills, therapeutic interventions, functional academics, personal growth and development, and employment skills. The Center's curriculum is aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. A private school, The Learning Center works in partnership with the sending school district and other involved agencies to best meet the needs of each student.

Every student has an Individualized Education Plan supported by the varied expertise of its staff and focused on helping him/her become as successful and independent as possible. Some students learn in self-contained classrooms; others follow the "block schedule," in which students visit different classrooms for various subjects (more closely resembling a public school model). The average teacher-student ratio is 1:3, and teams of specialists and clinicians from a variety of service areas, including Speech Language Pathology, Occupational Therapy, Employment Services, and Mental Health Counseling, also work with students in the classrooms. A full complement of nursing personnel is on staff, as well. This collaborative, multidisciplinary approach, combined with regular evaluation and assessment of each student's program, ensures that the curriculum best enables each student to meet his/her particular needs and goals.

Technology plays an important role in PGHS's educational programs as a tool to help students who are challenged by intellectual disabilities, trauma or mental health issues.

In the classrooms, all students have access to computers and any assistive communication devices they need. SMART Board interactive white boards allow educators to use creative and innovative techniques to interact with students. This creative use of technologies facilitates learning and helps enable students to meet their goals.

The residential program, with seven community-based homes in Waltham, Watertown and Belmont, provides students with a safe, intimate, therapeutic, 24-hour supervised living environment. In-house communication training and participation in leisure and recreational group activities in the residences and the local community are important features of the program. Clinical and Behavioral Specialists are present in the residences to provide training and support.

There are currently 60 students enrolled in The Learning Center, 86% of whom participate in both the Day and Residential Program. The remaining 14% are students who can successfully live with their families, and who participate in the Day Program. *For more information about PGHS, visit <http://www.protestantguild.org> and for a copy of the full job description, go to www.ecdonnelly.com.*

Challenges and Opportunities

PGHS has a strong mission, committed staff, excellent programs, and is in a solid financial position. However, the organization faces multiple challenges, both internally and externally, some of which can be turned into opportunities. These include:

Competition for Student, and the Increasingly Complex Needs of These Students. As the needs of the student population become increasingly complex, opportunities to develop and enrich programming and services are emerging. While more and more public schools are serving special needs students in their classrooms, those that fit the Guild's profile still require more intensive care to meet their complex needs. Other organizations are also beginning to compete for the same students that PGHS serves. The referrals that the Guild receives, meanwhile, are for students who tend to be older and with more complex needs, requiring more sophisticated and intensive individualized care. This fact, coupled with the strained state budget, must be at the front of any CEO's radar. It is essential that PGHS respond to these challenges in a way that differentiates them from other service providers and demonstrates their unique ability to provide excellent care and support for the students they serve.

Revenue Diversification. The school is funded primarily by tuition payments from the state. However, there are opportunities to create new revenue sources, building on core competencies, program knowledge and innovative ideas. Possibilities include growing the size of the student population, expanding into adult services, and offering teacher training and consultation. Any possibilities would have to be explored rigorously before decisions are made. Another diversification venue would be to develop a fundraising strategy and plan and to rigorously execute it.

Further Accreditation. While locally accredited and recognized by state funders as a provider of excellent services, gaining national accreditation would better position The Learning Center for fundraising, program expansion and other innovative ventures.

Expanded Recognition and Visibility of PGHS: What it Stands for and What it Delivers. To create opportunities, the Guild must be more engaged and build more partnerships in the disability world, primarily locally but also nationally.

Leadership Transition. There have been several changes in the Board and executive leadership over the past several years. After 25 years with a consistent and strong Executive Director, PGHS has had two Executive Directors in the past three years. Currently, a member of the Board has stepped up to serve as interim Executive Director for the duration of this search. The Board has experienced a period of transition, and is now broadening its membership and introducing changes to its governance rules and practices, with a focus on being more effective and bringing more value to the organization. PGHS and its senior management team have proven extremely resilient through these changes, limiting their impact on programs and students, but the staff are looking for a strong, capable helmsman to provide stability while moving the organization forward and helping it flourish.

The Position

Reporting to and working in partnership with the Board of Directors, the Chief Executive Officer will provide leadership to the Board in setting strategic direction and shaping policy; oversee PGHS operations; and be accountable for PGHS's overall management and performance. S/he will ensure that student and community needs are met by developing organizational capacity; enhancing quality systems and processes; improving organization-wide communication; and advancing PGHS through effective evaluation, benchmarking, quality assurance, and continuous improvement systems. Adept at identifying and seizing opportunities, s/he will ensure quality and financial sustainability for the future. S/he will balance financial and programmatic needs and will create a cohesive and high-performing senior management team, exercising a keen appreciation of the depth and broad range of skills, experiences and perspectives in PGHS's current staff,. S/he will inspire the staff and Board; enjoy and respect the students; and create a positive culture of energy, enthusiasm and possibility among staff, students, parents and the community.

This high-visibility position requires a leader who understand trends, realities and opportunities in the special needs and social services delivery world, and who can guide the organization to identify and guide its students toward feasible options following graduation. S/he will foster a public presence for the organization and advocate on behalf of special needs issues; and cultivate trusting, open communications and collaborations

with many key stakeholder groups, including private and public organizations, public officials at all levels of government, and the communities PGHS is a part of.

Initial Priorities and Expectations

In the first twelve to eighteen months, it is expected that the Chief Executive Officer will:

- Create a smooth transition that maintains financial viability, quality programs and high-performance standards.
- Cultivate strong, trusting internal and external relationships.
- Work with the Board to continue to strengthen and develop policies and procedures that best serve PGHS's current and future needs.
- Build on PGHS's strengths and vigorously nurture a cohesive, team-oriented culture of support, trust, openness, integrity, and positive reinforcement.
- Begin to position PGHS for the future, working with the Board and staff to clearly articulate a vision and create a strategic plan.
- Clarify program goals and develop performance benchmarks and objectives that drive the organization and allow evaluation of program effectiveness.
- Build staff capacity and clarify roles.
- Improve communication throughout the organization.
- Evaluate PGHS brand and increase the organization's visibility.

Key Responsibilities

Reporting to and working with the Board, strengthen PGHS's vision for the future and translate that vision into action.

- Lead the Board and staff to develop a strategic plan; work with them to create short- and long-term goals; and ensure that the agency's priorities are achieved.
- Balance PGHS's passion for the mission with its need to effectively operate as a business.
- Help to build and develop a strong Board and, as part of the strategic planning process, explore issues relating to Board composition, development and governance.
- Work in concert with the Board and keep members informed, in a timely manner, about performance and financial status, enabling them to make decisions that best support PGHS's goals.

Lead the agency to the next level of excellence and safeguard its operational integrity.

- Maintain quality programs, financial viability and high performance standards through the transition of leadership.
- Inspire and motivate staff, Board members and partners.
- Develop a high-performing leadership team that works well together and is empowered to make decisions.
- Attract and retain a diverse team of talented, culturally-competent staff to provide high quality services.
- Cultivate a culture of organizational openness and fairness, and improve internal communications and team performance.
- Assure that high professional standards are maintained throughout the agency.
- Provide timely, accurate and complete reporting of financial and operational information and assure compliance with all legal and regulatory requirements.
- Strengthen the role of data to monitor, evaluate and continuously improve PGHS operations, to evaluate how well goals are met, and to report on goals met and other results to school districts, grantors and other funding agencies.

Establish long-term financial sustainability by building on current, and identifying and securing new and ongoing, sources of funding.

- Lead all key fundraising activities, including oversight of the development staff in seeking grants, and create and maintain local and national relationships with key private and public funding sources, with the goal of bringing in a diversity of revenue streams and resources that will enable the agency to serve more clients.

Strengthen and continuously improve the agency's organizational capacities – its human resource, systems and business processes – as it continues to deliver quality services to a diverse population.

- Oversee agency operations in a way that realizes the mission, ensures excellence and encourages innovation.
- Assess administrative and management systems, staffing structure, HR policies, facilities, and use of technology and resources.
- Apply increasingly sophisticated business practices to build organizational capabilities and capacity to ensure excellence, improve efficiency and effectiveness, and support current and future needs.
- Ensure that facilities and residential space are safe, up to code, and provide positive environments for students by evaluating and maintaining them and by making recommendations to the Board on sale and purchase opportunities.

Cultivate existing and develop new partnerships and collaborations with organizations committed to supporting children and adults with special needs.

- Work actively to forge and build a diverse range of true partnerships and collaborations with key stakeholder groups that are vital to the enhancement of PGHS and the overall issues of special needs populations.

Create visibility for PGHS and awareness about the issues facing special needs populations.

- Evaluate the PGHS brand and implement strategies to ensure that all marketing, fundraising, and public relations initiatives reflect the full range of programs offered and the constituencies served.
- Represent PGHS in local and regional forums in order to promote the organization's innovative approaches and excellent services.
- Speak eloquently, persuasively and credibly about PGHS and its mission in many settings.
- Advocate effectively for support of programs that serve special needs populations with elected and appointed officials.

Qualifications

Experience

- Successful track record of building, strengthening, and working with a not-for-profit Board of Directors and its members.
- Credible leader with expertise in the field.
- Knowledge of, and proven success working with, student-centered, community-based organizations.
- Demonstrated management experience including recruiting, mentoring and developing staff, building high-performance teams and creating positive organizational cultures.
- Proven track record of leading change, growth, and organizational transformation.
- Leadership in revenue generation diversification and fundraising.
- Knowledge of and experience with program development, operations and continuous improvement and evaluation methods.
- Knowledge of state and federal agencies and regulations.
- Strong, effective partnership-building experience.
- Relevant advanced degree preferred.

Skills

- Exceptional vision, strategic planning skills, and ability to transform ideas into action.
- Strong business savvy and problem-solving skills.
- Skilled at balancing financial and programmatic concerns.
- Strong program evaluation skills and a history of using performance management methods.
- Excellent communicator with the ability to expand the agency's visibility, influence and impact; someone who can be passionate, compelling and persuasive.
- Skilled at creating team-centered work environments that are respectful, value integrity, and invite ideas and participation.
- A convener, exceptional relationship-builder and collaborator who is able to frame issues in ways that pull people together to work in partnership.
- Politically savvy.
- An advocate who is able to balance the needs and agendas of competing stakeholders.
- Skilled at recognizing and creating opportunities and leveraging resources; able to build momentum around ideas and initiatives and turn them into realities.
- Analytical; uses data to make thoughtful decisions.

Attributes

- Commitment to and passion for PGHS's mission.
- Commitment to cultural competency and sensitivity; experience working with individuals and groups from diverse racial, cultural, linguistic and socioeconomic backgrounds.
- Commitment to service and excellence.
- Agile, flexible, entrepreneurial and invigorated by challenge.
- Inspirational, energetic; and positive.
- Committed to the highest standards of integrity.

To nominate a candidate, or to apply (by forwarding resume and cover letter), please contact us at admin@ecdonnelly.com

The Protestant Guild for Human Services is an equal opportunity employer with a demonstrated commitment to hiring individuals who reflect the diversity of the communities it serves