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A First-Hand Review Advertorial

Managing the accounting for a nonprofit group can be a challenge, and in some ways even more challenging than running a business. While there is less focus on achieving a profit, getting the most from revenues is definitely a priority, and nonprofits also have much more stringent fund management requirements, tracking which projects and activities that specific funds are used for.

Preserving History

Those are just some of the challenges that Katharina Root faces in her role as bookkeeper for the New Mexico-based Friends of the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad. The 64 mile-long, narrow gauge railroad, first built in 1880, is operated for tourism by an interstate agency coordinated by the states of New Mexico and Colorado. The role of the nonprofit group, which is a 501c-3 organization, is to preserve, restore and help interpret the historic railroad line as a living museum.

To achieve its mission, the group relies on donations from more than 2,500 members around the world, and volunteer labor from more than 500 members who come to Albuquerque each year for work sessions. The work can be tedious, such as scraping and refurbishing boxcars, and some specialized work, like rebuilding 100 year-old steam engines, must be contracted out.

“People come from all over the country, many are railroad or history buffs, others are interested in helping the community,” she said. “These folks rock, and spend

countless hours and do amazing planning and work, and our board of directors, who

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Katharina, who runs an accounting practice in the area, works for the Friends of the Cumbres and Toltec part time, while also serving her mostly small business clients in the area. When she started managing the finances for the nonprofit about 17 years ago, the group was using an off-the-shelf accounting system that she said was limited in its capabilities.

“We really needed a system with true fund accounting capabilities, better reporting, and the ability to track by asset across multiple projects and multiple levels,” she said. “Nonprofit accounting has more complexities than for-profit business accounting. Katharina has to track budget of more than \$635,000 with more than 60 restricted funds, such as specific projects that a member has made a donation for. The group also receives some grants.

With her experience in accounting, she knew what the group needed, and she said that when she found AccuFund, and the CRM product that goes with it, she knew it would be a perfect solution for the organization. With the help of David Williamson, a local technology consultant, they were able to map their accounts and set up all of the features in the program, including importing existing vendor files, donors, projects and the balance sheet.

Life with AccuFund

Since the transition to AccuFund and the CRM fundraising system, Katharina says that preparing information for their annual audit is easier than ever before. “Our level of accuracy has increased by using AccuFund and we’ve had the most successful audit preps the last two years. I no longer feel anxiety about getting ready.” The system’s multi-segmented chart of accounts and reporting on those individual segments has also made a real difference, she said.

“There were reports that used to take a day to set up and run, and now they are on-demand and I can run them in seconds, and this saves time and stress.” She also

notes that the overall level of accuracy is much better, making it easy to know a fund

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