



Laid Off Execs Lend Hands to Charities

Highland Park resident among those putting skills to good use

During her time at *The Dallas Morning News*, Laura Bloom Gordon lit the fire under *Quick*, a newspaper that her development team launched in 10 days flat. She worked as the *News'* senior vice president of marketing and as its chief innovation officer. And she designed a new marketing system — one that would ultimately edge her out of her own job.

Last August, the Highland Park resident was laid off. Not one to grumble, "I'm still a big fan and continue to be a subscriber," she said. "I feel like they're doing really smart things and not following the leader."

She's since taken on a new leadership role of her own — a donated one, in the form of project consulting for the Genesis Women's Shelter. Gordon was aligned with the shelter last fall, when she joined the ranks of a growing organization called Executives in Action.

Founded a year ago, EIA arranges for top-level execs who are out of work to lead special projects for causes such as Genesis, where Gordon is helping raise funds and planning for the shelter's national conference in March.

As Gordon said, the program lets volunteers like her "continue to feel like an executive. I want to feel like I'm doing something during this transition, so it makes a lot of sense to me."

To qualify, participants must be unemployed, have previously held a vice-president title or higher with a salary of at least \$100,000, and have at least 15 years' experience in management. When approved, they receive a list of available projects, pick several they're drawn to, and let EIA make the final call. Once in, members work a day or two each week for a daily stipend of about \$125.

Most turn that money down, director Jeremy Gregg says, so EIA might begin compensating members with a lump sum upon completion of each project, most of which take about two to three months.

EIA's client list includes Contact Crisis, Girls Inc., Life Net, the Family Place, and Humanitarian Hands, and is open to organizations with specific and measurable project needs, Gregg said.

"Being a nonprofit, we're always short-staffed and always need an extra hand," said Genesis outreach director Lara Gaither.

"We've got really good legs in the Dallas community," she added in regard to the upcoming conference. "What we need to do now is take it to a national level, and that's what Laura's help has added for us."

Another EIA member, Rob Kietzman, has helped Genesis tread into the publishing world as the shelter creates a 25th anniversary book for children called *Noah and His Magic Shoes*.

"He's turned a dream into reality," Gaither said. "These executives we work with do completely different things for us."

EIA placed its 100th executive last month, which Gregg called a reason to celebrate.

"We started EIA as our response to the dual crisis of unemployment among senior-level execs and fundraising shortfalls among nonprofits," he said in an e-mail. "We see EIA as our attempt to turn the first into a solution for the second."

Gordon said she'll continue to promote the program after she finds a permanent position elsewhere.

"I'm very proud to talk about it when I do go on job interviews, because I want people to understand what I'm made of and what I care about," she said.

"It's very humbling in a lot of ways, because you realize you're impacting people's lives who are less fortunate than you are, and because you are able — without a lot of corporate constraints — to make suggestions that actually are put into action. You feel like you can have a direct impact."

To get involved with Executives in Action, go to www.ExecutivesInAction.org.



Executives in Action member Laura Bloom Gordon (left) talks at Genesis with Jennifer Cyr, director of the Conference on Crimes Against Women.

