



Is Jerry Sandusky on your next Board Meeting Agenda?

by Regina Funkhouser

If he isn't, he should be. Every single Board should be asking themselves "How can we prevent *that* from happening here?"

And by *that*, I mean avoiding the difficult and uncomfortable conversations – whatever they may be – that ensure good governance.

We have all been horrified by the stories about that football coach, and all of missed opportunities to protect children. As the news commentators talk about "tip of the iceberg" investigations, I wonder how culpable the Board of Directors of Second Mile might be.

All 501c3 nonprofit organizations are required to be governed by an independent group of thinkers – the Board.

Let me give you some background. Jerry Sandusky, the coach accused of abusing many young boys, was the founder of Second Mile, a 501c3 organization that serves at-risk youth. In addition, he was a "paid consultant", and after allegations of sexual abuse were made public in 1998 (he wasn't charged, but he admitted to indiscretion with young boys), he made almost \$500,000 from Second Mile. *And* the CEO and Assistant CEO of this organization were married. *And* their combined salaries in 2010 were over \$230k (How many conflict of interest issues do you see?). In 2008, upon learning that Sandusky was being investigated again, the Board "immediately made the decision to separate him from all of our program activities involving children. Thus, from 2008 to present, Mr. Sandusky has had no involvement with Second Mile programs involving children." (note - the relationship with Second Mile wasn't severed - just changed. Was that enough – or an easy way out?).

I am sure that every Board member of that organization is second guessing their role and wondering if they could have prevented this atrocity. (I know I should use the word "alleged"... so consider it used.)

Please don't get me wrong – I don't think anyone but Jerry Sandusky is responsible for the actions of Jerry Sandusky. But I believe that if the Board of Second Mile – the organization responsible for protecting the children it served - had tough, uncomfortable, ongoing conversations, Jerry Sandusky would not have had access to his victims. (The actions of Penn State are a completely different conversation.)

I know I get a little crazy when I talk about conflict of interest and whistleblowers policies. But these policies have a very serious purpose. I encourage you to not just vote to approve and then dismiss these documents, but create a culture in which these documents have a true and critical purpose. Challenge your own actions. Just because a conversation is uncomfortable, doesn't mean it isn't healthy.

At your next Board meeting, discuss how you encourage independent thought. Are you as a group encouraging debate – or squashing it?