ACCOLA

Board Update

Andree Aronson, CFRE ~ Vice President, Advancement *October 2026*

Executive Summary

We are just starting our fiscal year, and contributions are already **$25,000 ahead** of where we were at this point last year — a strong indicator of things to come.

- **Impact Breakfast:** The date is secured for April 30, 2027, and event planning is underway.
- **First virtual Open House:** Coming up October 22 over the noon hour to reduce barriers to participation.
- **Annual Report:** Being finalized now; available in early November.

Community Engagement through Volunteers & Partnerships

Community engagement is part of our Strategic Sustainability Plan, and we now have the internal systems in place to support it. Over the past year we launched our new database, shifted staffing so one person focuses on volunteers across all programs, and updated our training, policies, and procedures.

Our focus now is documenting current partners and the many relationships they carry, categorizing them, and defining clear levels of engagement: **Introductory, Collaborative, and Strategic**.

Partnership goals for FY2026-27 (reported quarterly)

Goal	What we'll do	Status
Broaden mission-aligned partner network	Identify and cultivate partnerships with organizations, congregations, and networks aligned with our three pillars; conduct a community partner mapping project	**In process**
Define and implement partnership tiers	Define Introductory, Collaborative, and Strategic levels of engagement; assign a tier to 100% of existing partners	**In process**
Strengthen mutually beneficial collaboration	Increase opportunities for shared programming, resource exchange, and joint advocacy	**In process**
Integrate partners into donor and volunteer ecosystem	Leverage partnerships for donor referrals, volunteer recruitment, and community reach; create cross-promotional opportunities	**Complete – ongoing**

Goal	What we'll do	Status
Improve partner communication and stewardship	Launch quarterly partner updates and an annual partner feedback survey	**Complete – ongoing**
Measure and communicate partner impact	Include partner outcomes in dashboards and reports; feature partners in our storytelling	**Complete – ongoing**

At our last Senior Leadership meeting, Matt and I had a generative conversation with the team about partners. We are finishing a comprehensive partner list to guide our mapping and cultivation efforts.

An example of our deepening partnerships:

1. **New Ignition Volunteer – Resume & Job Search Class**: We have a new Ignition volunteer who will be managing a resume and job-search class for LIS students. The volunteer will help students create and improve their resumes, search for employment opportunities, and prepare for interviews. Once the class is established and polished at LIS, we may look at offering the class at Sarah's as well if there is enough interest.
2. **Minnesota Truth Council**: Women at Sarah's Oasis, along with a few staff members, will be interviewed as part of a Minnesota Truth Council project. This project will provide an opportunity for women and staff to share their experiences and perspectives related to the Minnesota Metro Surge.
3. **Three New Sarah's Volunteers**: We are onboarding three new volunteers at Sarah's who will initially focus on organizing the linen closet and clothing closet. They have also shared that they are flexible and willing to help with other needs at Sarah's, which will give us additional support and flexibility as different needs arise.
4. **Blake Students**: We currently have students from Blake coming to LIS to practice English with our intermediate and advanced students. This has been a great opportunity for students to practice their English in a comfortable setting while building relationships with other students. In the spring, Blake Spanish students will also begin participating in a similar exchange.
5. **DeLaSalle Students**: DeLaSalle students will be coming to Sarah's several times throughout the school year to help with organization and other needs. This group is very flexible and has expressed a willingness to help wherever their support is most needed.
6. **Pax Christi**: We are continuing to work with Pax Christi and explore opportunities for volunteer and service support. They have expressed interest in helping meet needs within our programs and supporting the work happening at Sarah's and LIS. We will be tabling at

their event on November 22nd and they have expressed interest in providing donations for the women at Sarah's as well as the students at Learning in style.

7. **Coat Drive**: We are organizing a coat drive to help provide warm winter clothing to individuals and families who need it. This will be another opportunity to engage the broader community in supporting the people we serve.
8. **Local College Interns**: We are exploring opportunities to bring interns from local colleges into our programs. Interns would provide additional support to LIS and Sarah's while also gaining valuable hands-on experience and exposure to the work we do. We have written up some descriptions of what could be helpful at Sarah's...an Oasis and are working with local colleges to get these intern/volunteer opportunities posted.
9. **Budgeting & New Homeowner Program at Sarah's:** We are also looking at developing programming at Sarah's around budgeting and becoming a new homeowner. The goal is to provide practical financial education and help residents better understand budgeting, financial planning, and the steps involved in preparing for homeownership.

Open Houses

Targeted marketing and outreach for each Open House is paying off — in attendance and in new funding conversations.

Open House	Highlights
Sarah's	44 attendees. A foundation visited through a Consociate; we are now in conversation and hope to be invited to apply for a grant next year.
Learning in Style (September)	Guests were excited to hear from Cavan and appreciated Jim, our volunteer speaker, sharing his story and his path to Learning in Style.

Next: Virtual Open House — October 22, 12:00–1:00 pm. Same format as our in-person Open Houses. You should have received an easy-to-forward invitation to share with friends.

Grants

We are building a stronger institutional funding strategy, with outside expertise and new partnerships already in motion.

- **Holistic Grants:** We have contracted with Christine Schwitzer of Holistic Grants, whom Matt has worked with before. Her scope covers prospect research, a grants work plan, and an institutional fundraising forecast to support our operational, programmatic, and community engagement needs.

- **Center for Victims of Torture (CVT):** Through our growing connection with CVT, we applied for a joint grant that would bring CVT's mental health support to Sarah's and our Learning in Style students.
- **New Directors:** Sara and Cavan bring deep experience and connections in grant funding, which will greatly strengthen our grant prospects.

Board of Directors: Action Items

Board presence at Open Houses matters — guests notice when directors are in the room, and it builds trust with prospective donors and funders.

- ☐ Attend the virtual Open House on **October 22, 12:00–1:00 pm**.
- ☐ Forward the virtual Open House invitation to friends and colleagues.
- ☐ Plan to attend upcoming in-person Open Houses when you can.

INVEST IN YOUR COMMUNITY — HELP US PUT COMPASSION INTO ACTION.