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Alnisa Allgood's MadTech educates nonprofits in Madison

Do-gooders, meet your IT guide

BY **LIZ MERFELD** OCTOBER 25, 2012 2:00 PM

Alnisa Allgood is horrible with dates. Ask her when she graduated from Penn State, started any of her various nonprofits, moved to Madison, left for the West Coast, or returned to the Midwest, and invariably she'll laugh.

"I want to say four years ago?" she guesses, describing the genesis of **MadTech**, a 501(c)(3) consultancy she established here to help local "changemakers" stay at technology's leading edge. Allgood settles on 2009, and goes on to recount its history, which in every way is intertwined with hers.

Allgood, now 44, was only 14 years old when she began giving back, first mopping floors for Greensburg, Pa.'s Private Industry Council, "basically kind of a hybrid nonprofit-government organization for low-income people." She

parlayed that into office work for various nonprofits in the region.

At Penn State, while studying chemical engineering and administration of justice, Allgood co-directed the Lesbian Gay Straight Alliance. Compared to the other organizations it worked with, the Alliance was ahead of the curve in creating customized member databases and a website. Those organizations were soon asking for her help.

In summer 1991, Allgood landed in Madison and founded a similar center at UW-Madison, the **LGBT Campus Center**. "Nothing specific brought me here. I'm kind of nomadic," she says, adding that about every five years she tries to shake things up by doing something new or in a different place. Being ever on the move helps her add technical skills to her ensemble, most of them self-taught, such as computer repair and programming.

While here, Allgood also launched a web-based technology resource center for nonprofit groups nationwide. **Nonprofit Tech**, as she called it, soon gained 501(c)(3) status. She and its headquarters relocated to San Francisco for a decade, where she added hands-on, direct-service consultancy tech to its education offerings. These included web design, systems administration and network design. "It became obvious that providing that kind of information, coupled with direct service, could be a viable nonprofit model," she says.

Nonprofit Tech now calls Madison home again, even though its consultants, about 25 in all, are concentrated in the Bay Area. Others, mostly database consultants and web developers, work out of Ann Arbor, New York and Louisiana.

In 2009, as an outgrowth of Nonprofit Tech's

educational arm, MadTech was born. "I wanted to create a way for nonprofits to get consistent access to education to better accomplish their mission and goals," says Allgood.

Specifically, MadTech responded to the lack of a nonprofit management center in Madison. It focuses on education for nonprofits, social entrepreneurs, nonprofit volunteers and consultants. "Our goal is to keep abreast of information accessible to us so that we can make it more accessible to the nonprofit sector," Allgood says.

MadTech offers three types of workshops. On third Wednesdays, discussions on topics such as "Breaking into Mobile Giving" are led by Allgood or a guest speaker at the Goodman Community Center (6:30-8 p.m.). A quarterly workshop, dubbed MadTech Pro, brings together 20 to 40 learners for two to four hours for more in-depth training on a specific technology. This November will see the beginning

of MadTech Mornings at Daisy Cafe & Cupcakery (8-9:30 a.m. on second Tuesdays). The format will be casual.

"The goal is to get people there, grab coffee, and introduce them to a tool or topic that they can apply to their work that same day or week," Allgood says. Something like Google Drive, for instance.

All events are open to non-members; most are free. The decision to not be a membership-driven organization was deliberate. When planning MadTech, Allgood asked herself, "Do we create a membership organization that you slowly build and get people networking, or do we create a system where we meet nonprofits where they're at?" She decided on the latter, to let people show up if they're interested.

Allgood is also planning to revive MadTech's annual event, Madison Nonprofit Day, for summer 2013. It aims to "provide opportunities for the community to engage with nonprofits outside of being recipients of direct service," according to Allgood.

Two times a year, she stops to monitor the pulse of the MadTech community. To stay relevant, "We want to know what's going on, what are groups facing now."

Allgood is approaching year five of her work with MadTech, signaling that change may be coming. What that might entail is anyone's guess. Forgoing detailed plans, and dates, she admits, "I tend to just like doing stuff." After 30 years of nonprofit work, that much is clear.

For more info, see mad-tech.org or call 608-241-3616.

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