



Want to Do Something Like Second Stork in Your Community?

Second Stork's focus in 2015 is to cover more of Minnesota. After that, who knows? We might look for partners in other cities to expand Second Stork to other states, but that will be down the road.

Interested in doing something like Second Stork in your community? Here are some of the typical questions that we receive from around the country. We hope these questions help and inspire you to make a difference.

How did you start Second Stork?

Second Stork was started by a small group of like-minded people with experience in similar organizations, but who believed a different way to help new families was needed. The group met early mornings for a year or more in coffee shops – so we were very “grassroots”. To help refine our mission (who we wanted to help, and how we wanted to do it), we held a casual “focus group” or discussion panel, with 4-5 experienced social workers in our city. We chose social workers experienced in the broad area we wanted to serve, generally defined as “new families in crisis”. Those few hours were dramatic and invaluable in making our mission clear. We then found a name and filed to become a non-profit organization (a “501-c3”).

What do you suggest we do to get started?

We suggest forming a small group of people (your “Board”) who are truly committed and passionate about finding a way to help people in need. They also need to be people who are willing to donate their time and their skills – sometimes in ways that might be below their “pay grade” (e.g., loading trucks, packing boxes, etc.) In the early stages, you will need everything from expert legal support to manual labor – all *volunteer* time. You might want to also start by choosing people with a wide variety of expertise, availability, skills and networked connections in the community (for example, legal, accounting, public relations/marketing, social service, etc.) Explore too the burgeoning area of new retirees – they want to be active, engaged and making a difference in a new way in their lives.

Second, we suggest that you define where your community needs help, or where your collective passions lie (education, social service, other). You might find other non-profits or government programs with similar missions (like Second Stork) already serve your community. We suggest holding a “focus group” or discussion panel with several experts in your community. These should be people working directly with people in need on a daily basis, so they truly know what is working, and what is not working, in your community. Ask them more about trends, areas of need, processes, etc. that do not work well, how they would do it, and other key questions.

So , first off -- secure your Board, define your mission, select a name, and file as a 501-c3 in your state. There are significant resources available to guide you through forming a non-profit board, either in your legal community and on-line, in guidebooks, etc. Also, consider joining and getting the help from non-profit associations in your state to help you get started.

From there, you will begin to identify all the necessary tasks to get your operations underway. Be sure to find ways to spread the responsibilities across all board members. Consider forming sub-committees of the board, and include “non-board” members who want to help your new organization. Work to get many people involved, ready to commit their time, talent and resources.

What are some of your founding principles that you feel make you so attractive to donors, volunteers and others?

Second Stork was founded on three core principles that are key to our success:

1. **We focus solely on helping others in our community – no other “agenda”. We are completely non-religious and non-political in our mission.** As a result, we have been a unifying force to bring together people of all religions and political views to simply help others. This has also allowed us to be trusted as we enter hospitals, schools, employers, and others – we are very transparent and they know that we are not going to “slip in a message” that is counter to their environment and culture.
2. **We work to be as efficient as possible. We are passionate about reducing waste, streamlining processes, money and time that do not lead to helping more people.** One simple example - we eliminate all “approval processes.” Instead, we rely 100% on the judgment and expertise of the social workers to select the families that receive our help. We also eliminated all paperwork and recordkeeping from the (already “stretched”) social workers. We work to engage committed and reliable volunteers to run our board and operations, allowing us to remain 100% volunteer-based, with no paid staff, even after over five years of operations. When we need something, we tap individuals and businesses to support us with “pro bono” services or donations of in-kind products. As a result, we manage our operations very efficiently. Donors also have knowledge that almost 100% of their donated dollar goes toward helping people in need, and not to a lot of inefficient or unnecessary overhead.
3. **We work in ways that will always respect the dignity of families in need.** We never undertake anything that, even while advancing our goals, could otherwise disrespect the dignity and privacy of these families.

How do you raise your money?

We raise money in all sorts of creative ways. Our board members come to the table with all kinds of great ideas. As long as they support our core principles named above, we pursue all fundraising ideas – from individual donations, grants from foundations, collection drives at churches, schools and employers, and events – everything is “fair game”.

We actively look for other unique ways to gather in-kind support, with either “pro bono” services or in-kind donations, and both of these forms of support can offset the need for cash donations, especially in the early years of your operations.

How do you attract volunteers?

After you have defined your mission, think about what type of people would be most passionate and able to help. Second Stork has volunteer work for almost every age and all religions. We have attracted many of our necessary volunteers by working through schools and churches. We also have a lot of success garnering volunteers by using free postings on web pages that help match people interested in volunteering with a non-profit that can use their help. There are different websites in different cities, so do your research. Second Stork had great luck with www.volunteermatch.org. One suggestion is to write your posting with enthusiasm and passion, as well as a clear description of the type of volunteer workers you need (e.g., is lifting required?, driving?, weekdays, evenings or weekends?)

We love the name “Second Stork”. Can we also use the Second Stork name?

We have trademarked the “Second Stork” name and logo, so our name and logo are not available to any other organization. While we appreciate that people love our name as much as we do, we will not allow any use of our name outside of our operations. We were very fortunate that a local ad agency donated their creative team to help come up with our name and logo. We suggest you look to find similar pro bono creativity in your community.

Sorting and recycling to benefit others is something we are interested in doing. How do we find those with surplus for us to put to use in new ways like Second Stork?

Every city and state has different possibilities for corporate or other re-purposed surplus. In some cases, there are large non-profits that specifically deal in corporate surplus (for example, in the Minneapolis/Saint Paul area, there is a large non-profit called MATTER, previously called HOPE FOR THE CITY.) You might want to research to see if there is such an organization in your community that knows where there is surplus. There are two options -- either find the surplus and look for a use or cause, or start with a mission and work to fill that need in your community, possibly with re-purposed surplus.

We want to do exactly what Second Stork does in our community. How can we do that?

You can follow the steps we outlined, including starting with your hospitals and social workers. You might find that the need in your community or at your hospitals is a little different, or that some of the needs that we fill in Minnesota are already filled by others in your city or state.

If you find that your hospitals do need things like pack-n-plays, diapers, etc., you might want to start out just like we did, holding collection drives in various places. We collected cans of formula, pack-n-plays, newborn diapers and other items (identified by social workers) and then distributed them to social workers for delivery to newborns in need. We asked corporate groups, churches, schools, and employers to hold collection drives. We also asked certain large retailers if we could hold a drive under tent (or other stand) in their parking lots, asking customers to buy our items while shopping and bring them to our tent when they leave. If you are specifically interested in securing diapers for families in need, you might also consider researching the role of non-profit "diaper banks". One successful such operation in Minnesota is www.thediaperdrive.org which partners with various agencies to help distribute to families in need.

How can we get Second Stork to expand outside of Minnesota into our community?

We will face that possibility once we have tackled our next challenge – covering Minnesota outside of the Minneapolis/St. Paul area. We want to grow regionally before we grow nationally.

We sincerely hope that our grassroots Second Stork operation inspires others to start other new non-profits that find unique and creative ways to help others.

Thank you and good luck!