



Starting a New FEAT Group - Organizational Observations of a FEAT Warrior

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Introduction & History

- FEAT

- Established in 1992
- 4th Generation Board
- Funded grants to start Home Programs for more than 80 children
- Still fighting to get services in our community.

- Michael McIntire

- Parent
- FEAT Officer & Board member for 3 years
- Founder, Co-Chair - California Alliance for Legislative Fairness and Education in Autism Teaching (CALFEAT)
- www.feat.org Webmaster, FEAT Lists owner.



Discussion Topics

- Subjective Stuff

- What is a FEAT?
- The Mission
- Services
- Incorporation & Taxes
- Having a Board
- Goals and Objectives
- Fundraising
- Resources
- Work Hard & Have Fun
- Organizational Burnout
- The Future

- Technical Stuff

- The FEAT Name & Logo
- Incorporation
- The 501(c)(3)
- Communications
- Insurance
- Answering the Phone...
- Thoughts on Paid Staff.
- Resources



What is a FEAT?

- From the FEAT Mission Statement:
 - FEAT is a collection of Parents, Professionals and Educators dedicated to Education, Advocacy, and Support of the Northern California Autism Community
- What do we advocate?
 - FEAT is an advocate for science based intervention methodologies for autistic children of all ages.
 - Both Behavioral & Medical interventions



What are the tenets of FEAT

- Give parents the best information and services for their children
- Parents make methodological choices
- You are more powerful as a group than as individuals
- No single methodology will work for all children
- Direct advocacy for scientifically proven methodologies
- Enable discussion for promising non validated treatments & methodology.
- Discourage the use of disproven methods and technology.
- Respect everyone



Avoid commitment to:

- single methodology
 - Some are proven & Some are disproven
 - No one method works with all children
- single vendor
 - Parents and Vendors Objectives are **FUNDAMENTALLY** different
 - One is to help their children (it's personal)
 - Other is to make money (not a bad thing)
 - Foundation of the differences in CALFEAT & CAL-ABA
 - Each could best represent different positions
 - Parents cannot speak for Professionals
 - Professionals cannot speak for parents
 - Avoid professionals that try



What is your FEAT?

- Dependent on the needs in your local community.
 - Lack Service Providers
 - Need Critical Mass of trained tutors
 - IEP help
 - Influencing Legislation
 - Educating educators
 - Do Parents need Information
 - Do you lack a “community”
- The community decides what the needs are.
 - New Service Providers
 - Tutor Training
 - Legal Advocacy
 - Political Advocacy
 - Education
 - ABA Clinic or Replication Site
 - Personal Support
 - Resource Meetings
 - Having Fun



The Mission - Organization 101

- Understand your Mission.
 - What do you want to accomplish?
 - What will it take to accomplish it.
 - It is your guide to making decisions when there is too much to do, with too few resources
 - Important to state your mission in writing.
 - One sentence, 25 words.
- Define your goals.
 - How are you going to fulfill your mission. Use measurable metrics
 - fund 5 workshops
 - Build a clinic or school for 10 students
 - Train 20 new tutors
 - Hold monthly Parents Resource Meetings
 - Hold the annual Dinner Dance and Auction.



Services

- Our Tactical FEAT:

- Funds Grants for Workshop Families
- Coordinates LIFE consultations
- Monthly Resource meetings
- IEP Mentors (new)
- Dinner Dance, Conference, Xmas & Summer parties
- Training Grants for Tutors
- Direct Advocacy to Local and State Disabilities and Educational Organizations
- Legal Aid grants

- Our Strategic FEAT

- Builds enabling infrastructure:
- MIND Institute
- CALFEAT, FEATUSA
- Interfaces with Local and State Agencies
- Professional Video
- Website & List Server
- IEP Advocacy
- Legislative Education



Incorporation & Taxes

- Incorporation is important when:
 - You raise and disperse funds
 - Conferences, Grants
 - Liability insurance is important to the members
 - Members provide public speaking
 - protection for professionals on the board
 - \$1700 per year for our 15 member board
 - Need to give income tax credit to entities that donate funds or services
 - The 501(c) (3) Chartered Non-Profit
 - Certain Advocacy Functions conflict with 501(c) (3)



Board Members

- Start with a set of like minded persons.
 - Goals, Fiscal Objectives
- Board meetings are for making decisions - come prepared
 - Same day Resource and board meetings - NOT.
- Members contribute to projects where they have passion and expertise
- Everyone contributes
 - Level headed & Driven
 - Balance vs. Fire in Belly
- Professional diversity.
 - Corporate Attorney
 - Accountant
 - Executive Management
 - Entrepreneur
 - Disabilities Advocate
 - Marketing/ Fund Raising
 - Local Behavioral and/or Medical Professionals
 - One good Geek



Goals and Objectives

- Each has an Owner
 - Passion for the project
 - Other members contribute to it
- Officers Reports
 - President
 - Vice President
 - Treasurer
 - Secretary
 - Approved Minutes are required for corporations.
- Update on each project at each board meeting
 - What was accomplished?
 - What are the next steps.
 - What issues need attention
 - Resource Help & reallocation



Fundraising

- Is Difficult & time consuming
 - Solicitation Letters
 - Dinner Gala's
 - Conferences
 - Sundries
- Get predictable income
- Most of your funds will come from your constituency and their families
- United Way is a pain:
 - Make sure you have the resources to do the work
- Grants & resources
 - make sure the grant fits your mission statement and goals.
 - Resource intensive
- Financial Guarantor for risky projects - NOT
 - The Golf Tournament fiasco



Building Local Resources

- The Tutor Base

- Incent them to stay in community
- Offer training workshops
- Encourage vendors to work with each other
- Coordinate tutors
- Share them amongst families
- Partial Grants for training and education

- The Consultancy Base

- FEAT originally funded Several people to train 3 months at UCLA
 - Results mixed.
- Required to be successful:
 - Trained, experienced Post Masters or Ph.D.
- UCLA offers 9 month program.
- Start by grouping parents and flying them in.



Work Hard & Have Fun

- “You will meet your best life-long friends here”
 - from our initial call to FEAT
 - Has turned out to be True
- Make contacts with the local ASA, UCP, and Downs organizations
- If your not having fun, your doing something wrong.
 - Barbecue / Pool Parties
 - Rent the local Gymnastics hall for an afternoon.
 - Have a Cocktail Social for parents
 - Halloween Party
 - Christmas Party



Organizational Burnout

- Common Mistakes:

- Lack of Focus

- Doing projects that do not “stick” to the mission statement
- The “grant monitor”

- Too much to do

- Stop worrying - there is always too much to do
- If someone in the organization does not have the passion for a project that needs doing - then it won't get done

- Spread too thin

- Always be recruiting

- Be realistic about what goals and objectives you can achieve with the resources you have.

- Tell people to stay away when they are burned out.

- Reward people.

- Tell them when they do good...
- Tell others when they do good...



The FEAT Name & Logo

- FEAT recommends use of the name:
 - FAMILIES for EFFECTIVE AUTISM TREATMENT
 - Name is much more inclusive
 - The “Early” moniker made parents of older children feel excluded.
 - Add a prefix or suffix to indicate your location
 - There are ~20 formal groups, only one of which uses the “FEAT” acronym - that’s us.
 - No Service Mark is held on either name
 - No Service or Trade Mark is held on either of the FEAT Logos, (located at www.feat.org)



Non-Profit Incorporation

- Protect your board members
 - Financial Liability
- You must file tax returns every year.
- Requires a certain amount of overhead
 - Make sure you need it
- State chartered
 - NOT a 501(c)(3)
 - applicable to state law
- You need a Attorney or Accountant - either get one to volunteer or get one on the board!
- You can find the FEAT bylaws, or articles of incorporation on the FEAT website.
- This stuff costs money, so please plagiarize.



The 501(c)(3)

- IRS grants status
- Requires extra paperwork.
- Takes time
 - expect six months
- Virtual Requirement for Corporate and Government Grants
- Is sometimes in conflict with certain types of “lobbying”
 - get local advice from one of your lawyers



Communications

- Have regular board meetings
 - it avoids fracturization
 - Use EMAIL
 - Cheap & Easy
 - Keeps a record
- Newsletters are effective
 - Postage is Expensive
 - non-profit will save \$\$
 - must be regular
 - get balanced reporting
 - NEVER sell the list.
- Triage the Voice Mail
 - New Parent Orientation
 - Your most personable & knowledgeable
 - Do it Every Day
 - Set expectations on the outgoing message.
 - If multiple outgoing is available use it
 - mailing address
 - meeting location & times
 - upcoming events



Thoughts on Paid Staff.

- Examine why it is needed
 - Good fund raising, little resources to implement projects
 - Declining local participation
 - Can you afford it?
 - Is the result worth the \$\$ spent?
- Consistency vs. specific projects
 - 20 hours month?
 - 20 hours week?
 - Mailings?



Summary - Types of Groups

- Replication Site/Clinic
 - Creates Clinic
 - More of a Business model
 - Hires Staff
- Traditional FEAT
 - Workshops
 - Grants
 - Advocacy
 - Resource Meetings
 - Information Source
 - Resource Training
- Advocacy Group
 - IEP help or
 - Political Advocacy
- Resource Groups
 - Informational Meetings
 - Recreation Events



Some Help

- Maurice's book
 - Dr. Ron Huff's chapter on how to setup a FEAT
- <http://www.feat.org>
 - FEAT bylaws
 - Don't forget to tell us about yourself
 - contact information
- FEATUSA
 - List of FEAT Groups Officers
- Please remember: Our time & resource is very limited
- Online resources
 - FEAT will be happy to host:
 - WEBSITE, LOCAL LISTS
 - www.feat.org/FEATXX
 - FEATlist, FEATnews
 - Officers inclusion in FEATUSA list
 - REQUIRES:
 - one good geek
 - Any donation would be helpful, but is NOT required.