

The First Tee of Central Valley

I found my article in the Modesto Bee, the newspaper of my hometown. The article is Ron Agostini, *Dollars Equal Tee Time for First Tee Program*, Modesto Bee, September 9, 2012. I found this article relevant for a number of reasons. It demonstrates who Sandra de Alcuaz is, gives some insight to First Tee's involvement in the community, and reports that the organization's 10-year anniversary was on November 15.

Founded 15 years ago, The First Tee is an international nonprofit organization that has reached 6.5 individuals as of 2012. Although it started as a way for golf to become more accessible to young people, it now has evolved into an organization teaching core values. The First Tee now provides services in over 200 communities, including my hometown of Modesto, CA. More information can be found at the organization's website, thefirsttee.org.

On November 15, 2012 The First Tee of Central Valley held its annual fundraiser and celebrated its 10-year anniversary. At this event the executive director, Sandra de Alcuaz, gave an address to the attendees. During the course of her address she stated that she voted for President Obama in the election held a number of days before. Her statement was met with vocalized disapproval and calls for her removal. Many members of the organization's board of directors were in attendance and began talking about removing her from her position after hearing this statement. The situation raised two issues: the duties required of the board, and whether the statement violate the prohibition of political involvement by a nonprofit organization.

Perhaps, if the directors do act to remove Sandra from her position, they will breach their duty of care. Sandra is an excellent businesswoman and has been an integral part of the

organization's Central Valley chapter for years. If the board does remove her they might not have acted with sufficient care when reaching this decision.

The directors' action could also be seen as a breach of the duty of loyalty. They are required to act in a manner that will not harm the corporation. Removing someone who has benefitted such an organization just because of a personal bias could be seen as putting their own interests ahead of those of the corporation. On the other hand, if the donors and members disapprove of the executive director's Democratic vote, they might pull their memberships and donations. Thus, the directors could argue that failing to remove her would be harmful to the organization.

The words of the executive director did not advocate for a specific candidate or cause, so she did not engage in political speech that jeopardized the organization. The reaction of the organization could be seen as advocating against a specific party, but the action is taking place post election. Removal would send a clear anti-Democrat statement, but does not mean that the organization is engaged in prohibited political campaign activities.

This situation sheds some light on how nonprofits actually operate. Board membership or an executive position can sometimes be seen as a mark of social achievement. A concern over social status may influence the decisions of board members who hope to improve their position in the local social scene. It is unclear if this is the motivation of the board members in this situation. Board members may play musical chairs with boards they choose to sit on, using nonprofits as tools of social politics.

The First Tee of Central Valley is a great organization. It has had a positive impact on the community for 10 years. I chose this article in order to apply some of the principles we have learned recently and because I have connections with many board members and volunteers. I see

this as an interesting look at how local chapters of large nonprofit organizations conduct themselves and to demonstrate the reality of how nonprofits are run.

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