

Norton Kiritz, 70, Teacher of the Art of Seeking Grants, Dies

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Norton J. Kiritz, who found his niche teaching people with a worthy cause how to pitch it effectively to potential sponsors, died Jan. 30 in Los Angeles. He was 70 and lived in Redondo Beach, Calif.

The cause was melanoma, according to the Grantsmanship Center, of which he was the founder and president. Mr. Kiritz started the center, which is based in Los Angeles, in 1972 as a boot camp for community groups, nonprofit organizations and public agencies that hoped to start programs or keep them alive but that lacked the know-how to make the potential benefits clear to skeptical donors.

The center offers a Grantsmanship training program, a five-day workshop that helps groups clarify and organize their plans, frame their proposals and apply for grants themselves, bypassing costly outside fund-raisers. The center says it has instructed more than 100,000 representatives of private and government agencies nationwide.

In 2000, the California Community Foundation described Mr. Kiritz's text, "Program Planning and Proposal Writing," as "the proposal writer's bible." Mr. Kiritz had said he wanted to take the hustle out of the process and was convinced that prospective supporters, wary of money-chasers, could be swayed by demonstrations of solid planning and accountability.

Norton Julian Kiritz grew up in the Bronx and attended Bronx High School of Science. He became a cryptologist while serving in the Army in the mid-1950's and graduated with a degree in psychology from the University of California, Los Angeles, in 1959. He held a number of jobs working with juvenile offenders and disadvantaged children before joining the Community Action Agency of Los Angeles in the 1960's.

The agency was an offspring of the Johnson administration's antipoverty program under the aegis of the Office of Economic Opportunity. Mr. Kiritz was the planning director of the Los Angeles branch and conceived of the Grantsmanship Center as he dealt with a welter of neighborhood groups with plenty of ideas and not enough money.

As president of the center, he also lobbied for more openness on the part of grant-makers. In 1975, Congress appointed a commission to look into the matter, and testimony by Mr. Kiritz and others helped prompt the formation a year later of the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy in Washington, a clearinghouse and research tool for the nonprofit sector.

Mr. Kiritz is survived by his wife of 22 years, Cathleen Elliott Kiritz; two sons, Nicholas M., of Washington and Alexander C., of Redondo Beach; and a brother, Stewart, of Palo Alto, Calif.

"The world is full of good intentions, and I never met a nonprofit whose mission statement I didn't like," Mr. Kiritz told The New York Times in 1998. "But I have not met all that many who could present some evidence of specific accomplishments that would lead in the direction of fulfilling their mission."

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