### Scaling your nonprofit to meet growing needs, with Carlos Baldovinos of The Mission at Kern County

Andrew Olsen: Hey everyone. This is Andrew Olsen, host of the Rainmaker Fundraising podcast. I'm here with my guest cohost for the week, Shawn Saunders from Dickerson Bakker & Associates.

Shawn Saunders: Yeah, it's good to be back again Andrew.

Andrew Olsen: Hey Shawn great to have you here and we are, we're so excited to have Carlos Baldovinos, the Executive Director of The Mission at Kern County with us today. Carlos, welcome.

Carlos Baldovin: Hey, welcome. Thanks for having me today.

Andrew Olsen: Super excited to have you here. Could you take just a few moments and share with our guests a little bit about yourself and about the mission?

Carlos Baldovin: Well, about myself, I grew up in Minneapolis. We've been in California now for about 11 years. It's great you know just being part of a community like Bakersfield they call the central valley in California. It's, it's one of the those communities that has a Midwest feel, I feel very much at home.

Carlos Baldovin: The only thing different about it is I've never experienced 100 degree weather for so many days, [crosstalk 00:00:58] so that's the only difference. But otherwise, it's a great community. I feel very much at home and raising my family. There are ministries doing great.

Carlos Baldovin: You know, the mission is, you know, you may not know, maybe for our listeners this morning, that California has 25% of the homeless population in the United States.

Andrew Olsen: Wow.

Carlos Baldovin: That equals to 134,000 people are homeless in our great state of California. Such a crisis, I mean from north to south, east to west in that state. So that... let's drill it down to Bakersfield, the Central Valley that, I mean, when I even look at just Bakersfield in itself, we've had a 50% increase of homelessness from last year this year, and that's from a recent-

Andrew Olsen: Wow [crosstalk 00:01:48]-

Carlos Baldovin: It's big. I mean, it's significant. So that's very indicative of what's happening in the state of California. Show what we've done to address things, we're looking at expanding shelter. Our shelter capacity right now it's at 96% every single night of capacity. And then just a shelter side.

Carlos Baldovin: We have programs, they're working with folks that are coming off of addictions. We have a retail operation, encore boutique. That's a job training program. Recently about 13 months ago, we opened up a women and children's facility that's about a mile away from our campus and we're looking to expand more services. I mean I'm in the middle of doing something else with a donor in a community nearby called Oildale. That's actually going to be an extension of the current women's and children's program to include transitional.

Andrew Olsen: Okay.

Carlos Baldovin: So the need is great. I mean there's just a lot going on.

Andrew Olsen: Yeah.

Carlos Baldovin: I don't foresee it, you know, easing up in the next five years I'm mean I think there's more going to be more of it. And when you look at the city side and the county really are trying to drill down on their efforts because I mean I'm seeing this that the community wants them to answer. So, I mean you look at, it's a great opportunity for the faith community. Like, we're operating at the mission to really be a leader in this whole situation regarding homelessness.

Andrew Olsen: Yeah [crosstalk 00:03:21].

Shawn Saunders: Yeah. And if I may interject real quick, it reminds me of that verse in Proverbs Carlos, where it says, "A wise man scales the city." It seems like that's that it reminds me of that what you're doing is scaling the problem so that you can then scale the solution. Right?

Carlos Baldovin: Right. I mean, yeah. And it's going to take an effort. I mean, it looks like too that we, we want to be very intentional about what we get involved with too.

Shawn Saunders: Yeah.

Carlos Baldovin: We understand that, you know, you have the, a lot of things that are being said and you may not even not be aware of it, but, and ending homelessness.

Andrew Olsen: Sure.

Carlos Baldovin: I mean, you hear, and that's a very, it's almost a soundbite. People keep talking about it. It's, it's a popular thing to say, I don't say ending homelessness. I mean the scripture says "You will, you will have the poor among you." You know, so that doesn't show me, that tells me anything that we're going to solve homelessness.

Andrew Olsen: Right.

Carlos Baldovin: What we can do is reduce homelessness. We can help with that. And we can be in the forefront and the leaders in helping with those efforts.

Shawn Saunders: Absolutely. Yeah.

Andrew Olsen: So the, the need that you're describing seems immense and, and we all know that, especially in the kind of work that we do in rescue ministry, you don't meet that need without having a strong and broad base of, generous philanthropic supporters. Talk to us a little bit about, you know, your role as an, as an Executive Director. Where do you get involved in philanthropy for the organization? At what point do you step back and let others take over those kinds of efforts? What's it look like in your shop?

Carlos Baldovin: You know, for me, I look at the executive director, CEO if you want to call it that, they have to be in the forefront of talking to the donors. Okay. You just never know who you're going to run into. And in this day and time when you have direct mail, you have, you know, social media information overload that you always want to be aware of what's going on. That's what I was able to tell you these statistics, cause I know I'm involved in those details. I mean I have to be, I can't just... I can't bury my head in the sand and expect for example, that, you know, money just going to come in or direct mail is going to do its thing or you know, it's going to be automatic. You've got to be intentional in getting involved in those things. And donors know that.

Carlos Baldovin: I mean they can tell if you don't, if you're just automatic, you know, they, they do. And I choose not to do that I just, I, I really engage, I'm really involved. I mean when we just finished our recent capital campaign, I mean I was very engaged.

Andrew Olsen: Okay.

Carlos Baldovin: I mean very, very involved. And I look at it, the health of the organization financially depends... it goes hand in hand with programs. I can't do programs. I can't do ministry if I don't have the resource to support that. I can't live on hope and a prayer.

Andrew Olsen: Yeah, absolutely.

Shawn Saunders: Hope isn't a strategy is right?

Carlos Baldovin: Right.

Andrew Olsen: So you said something about the organization's financial health. One of the things that Shawn and I often run into is organizations that are financially healthy, that are raising, you know, the kind of money they need to operate their programs. Often there's a thread of culture through that, right?

Andrew Olsen: Where if you don't have a healthy culture, you can't... internally you can't be successful externally. Talk to us a little bit about the role you see culture playing from an internal perspective and its impact on your work in the community.

Carlos Baldovin: I do believe that you have to be open them with the community, but it all starts with the employees. I and I'm very big, any project we've started, even in our staff meetings, I'm really intentional about getting our team... when I say the team, did the staff, and it all starts with my leadership team. We're on the same page then see you have the same message, same words are coming out. The same soundbites are coming out from me on the Friday morning staff meeting to when I go and sit down with a donor for Saturday morning coffee. It all goes hand in hand if I'm not seeing the same thing and more of a staff member saying different things or you know, just what the heck's going on here?

Carlos Baldovin: Right. Even the amount of people we serve on a night, I mean I'm very well aware what, how many people stayed in the shelter the night before because guess what, donors ask me all the time-

Andrew Olsen: For sure, yeah. [crosstalk 00:07:39].

Carlos Baldovin: Especially what I just told you, some of these numbers it's critical right now that I have to be in the know and that's, to me that's it's, it's about messaging. It's about being on the same page. You can't have information overload on some of this stuff and that really just really presented itself in what you're doing to serve the community more and more because they expect a lot from us right now.

Andrew Olsen: For sure.

Shawn Saunders: Yeah and I hear you saying communication's a big part of how you're shaping culture there goes with that book, a Franklin Covey wrote Growing at the Speed of Trust. And that's one of the core things he identifies as that communication piece because that builds trust.

Carlos Baldovin: It does.

Andrew Olsen: Absolutely. So I want to switch gears a little bit to talk about the campaign that you mentioned a second ago. Talk to us a little bit about, you know, what that campaign was designed to do, what the goal was and give us a couple examples of, the kind of work that you had to do through that campaign and your team had to do in order to be successful.

Carlos Baldovin: You know, obviously we knew that there was a need for women and children to recover. We were seeing a lot of women come through our doors that had children. But they will not commit to a program because they did not want to leave their kids behind. I mean, there could be battling addiction. There were, you know, flat out, you know, hooked on drugs, a junkie. But they still have that motherly instinct that did not want to leave their children.

Carlos Baldovin: So they forego a program. So guess what, the child would grow up in an environment of using drugs. I'm sorry using drugs, being around drugs.

Andrew Olsen: Sure. Yeah.

Carlos Baldovin: So normally you're around that staff, you're probably more than likely you're gonna be around that stuff and use it eventually. It just kind of what it is. And so I'm like how can I help the next generation of kids going up? Not even if I can sow a seed of Jesus or, or just some normalcy or some some stability wouldn't that'd be great? I mean, wouldn't that'd be great just to sow that seed? So we just, we began to look at possibilities, what would that would look like? So that meant we had to start a capital campaign.

Carlos Baldovin: So first of all, I started with our board, started with our leadership staff, then one with the staff. We took the steps and we didn't present it obviously to the whole community as a whole. Very, very key donors. Right? We raised, I think it was 80% of the dollars that we needed and then we, then we did a public rollout. Basically what capital campaigns companies tell you to do. We followed it to almost to the T.

Carlos Baldovin: Except there was a couple of variables in there that some high donors came to the table that I didn't know that were going to come to the table and we were able to close it out. It was a one point $1.8 million capital project and we were actually able to close out in six months.

Andrew Olsen: Wow-

Shawn Saunders: That's awesome.

Carlos Baldovin: So something that would have probably taken 18 months to do-

Shawn Saunders: Yeah, I would say, yeah.

Carlos Baldovin: 18 months-

Shawn Saunders: 18 to 24-

Carlos Baldovin: Yeah we actually closed it down in six months but on our front end we had to engage the donors. I mean a lot of coffee meetings, a lot of like gatherings, home gatherings, a lot of one-on-ones, a lot of spaghetti and meatballs. Donors like Spaghetti. [crosstalk 00:11:05] This specific donor wants to get in meatballs. I'm like, I went to the same restaurant so many times in one week. I was like, are you kidding? Right. I haven't been to that restaurant [crosstalk 00:11:13] since.

Andrew Olsen: I bet.

Carlos Baldovin: So you know a lot of that stuff. And just really sharing the passion the vision for what you're doing. And so we got to a spot I mean we're able to get these two large substantial gifts within actually probably month number five.

Andrew Olsen: Wow.

Shawn Saunders: Okay.

Carlos Baldovin: And then it was easier once we got that to kind of go through the finish line.

Andrew Olsen: Okay. So one of the things Shawn, shared with me that surprised me a little bit. You know, often when an organization's gonna go into a campaign, we always recommend you conduct a feasibility study and get an understanding of what the community believes and feels and that can help shape your strategy. Now you chose not to do that and it worked out well.

Carlos Baldovin: It worked out fab because see that's where it comes down to you have to understand your community.

Shawn Saunders: Yeah.

Carlos Baldovin: You have to understand the need. That's remember we talked about communication, getting out to the community on a moment ago is that means you're really tuned in to what's going on around you, the need right? So, we chose not to do feasibility study and it was the right thing to do.

Andrew Olsen: Did your board have any angst about that or were they comfortable with that decision?

Carlos Baldovin: No, they, saw the need. I mean it was, there was a, there was enough prep work on the front end that I didn't have to do the other things.

Andrew Olsen: Gotcha. Okay.

Carlos Baldovin: But we were... we rolled it out fine.

Shawn Saunders: That's great. Yeah. Well that's a good point to you being tuned in to, the community to be able to, you know, you had good instincts on it like and, and I remember us talking about that and I think also in proportion to your budget, I think you made a wise decision. So we've got it worked out.

Carlos Baldovin: Yes. Yeah.

Shawn Saunders: So Carlos with the campaign, did, did you guys acquire, cause it went so fast, were you able to acquire some new major donors to the organization or no?

Carlos Baldovin: Absolutely.

Shawn Saunders: Yeah.

Carlos Baldovin: Absolutely we did so much that one of the high donors from this grouping that was part of this project they actually are funding, another project it's-

Shawn Saunders: Already?-

Carlos Baldovin: Entirety.

Andrew Olsen: Already.

Shawn Saunders: Wow. That's awesome.

Carlos Baldovin: I mean the building's been bought Shaun, the buildings been bought. I mean the construction will start probably later this summer or early fall. I've got operational dollars committed up to three years from them.

Shawn Saunders: Wow.

Carlos Baldovin: It is one of those, it doesn't happen. I understand. I understand.

Andrew Olsen: It's like the purple unicorn donor.

Carlos Baldovin: I get, it doesn't, but you know what they, they got involved with this project that they saw the success and they're like, you know, we want to keep going with this and we have the financial capital to do it. We just know who's going to do... they trust our abilities to operate it.

Shawn Saunders: Yeah.

Andrew Olsen: That's awesome.

Carlos Baldovin: So that's where... yes, I was able to, we were able to land somebody that believed in it and wanted it to be financially invested in ongoing ministry.

Shawn Saunders: Yeah. Outstanding. And as far as like, like a number, was it just several large ones that came in or would you say like there was no, do you have a handle on like, hey, we picked up maybe 10% of the campaign was through new money, or have you looked at that?

Carlos Baldovin: You know what I mean? The, this family gave quite a bit. I mean they did. We ended up getting some new donors in the mix that had given money but never, substantial money to really, I mean not, downing a $5,000.00 but never in the spot that it's like here's you know, here's $80,000.00 here's $100,000.00

Shawn Saunders: Yeah major investment like that.

Carlos Baldovin: That was major investment.

Shawn Saunders: Gotcha.

Carlos Baldovin: But with that, when you give those kind of investment, when they give those kind of investments, those people usually want some sort of naming rights, which we had never done that's a thing that when I look at the capital campaign model, we had to really lean on, you know, on that representative that was assigned to us and walking us through. How does that look like?

Shawn Saunders: Gotcha-

Carlos Baldovin: The naming of it. Cause we had not, you know, that we didn't have experience with it. Because different donors have different request. [crosstalk 00:15:35] Depending on the size of the gift.

Andrew Olsen: Sure, yeah and [crosstalk 00:15:36] the valuation and that stuff-

Carlos Baldovin: That's right. That's right [crosstalk 00:15:39]

Shawn Saunders: So would you say you converted with... because you got several large ones that they all convert to supporting your operating budget?

Carlos Baldovin: You know what donors, a lot of times what I've noticed with a capital campaign, you can get them into your flow. Usually they don't like to get into the whole direct mail flow.

Shawn Saunders: I can imagine. Yeah.

Carlos Baldovin: They're just not into that. They want a very specific for their ask. You know, for the ask that we gave them like, okay, how can I help them keep going with this investment?

Andrew Olsen: Sure.

Carlos Baldovin: Right. How can I be part of it? So that's where we've had to really engage them more. But you get them involved in, let's say bring them to the gala and they see an opportunity like that. It gives them, it's a mission update. It's a state of the, almost like a state of the union type of [crosstalk 00:16:35] and usually people, they love that stuff. Like okay great. They did right with my money. Right. They're moving, my investment forward. It's not just sitting there and lives are being changed. That's why they give it in the first place so.

Shawn Saunders: Yeah. So it kind of leads me to the next question, Carlos. Are there other things that you're doing in particular to leverage? It sounds like you've got a lot of momentum from the campaign. Are there other ways that you're leveraging that? I mean you've mentioned the relationship and it's interesting with, you know, with the capital campaign, which I'm sure getting these gifts north of $25,000.00 and up, you didn't mail them a direct mail piece to get them to give that it was a relationship.

Carlos Baldovin: Absolutely.

Shawn Saunders: So it only makes sense if we want them to continue to give in that vein to the operating budget it's gotta be relationship. Are there any things that you've done the leverage, the momentum, relationship wise and maybe in some other ways?

Carlos Baldovin: You know, I'm very, you know, we invite them in... because we opened that facility was last May. So they, I mean our gala was three months out, three, four months after that. So they've got, they got a, an update. Right. I was very, very careful though because there's a known syndrome up there, it's called donor fatigue. You know, you keep pumping them and pumping them up. So, I have in the last probably six months, just retrieved a little bit, just let them... but it doesn't mean I'm done because I'm planning on doing something as I get home is to do an external communication with them. Hey, this is where your dollars have gone in the last year. This is how many lives had been changed. This is how many women have stayed with us. Thank you for your generosity. I wanted to give you an update and if you want to consider giving more money to this let us sit down and talk about it.

Carlos Baldovin: But I want to be very careful because I, somebody told me that and it was, "Carlos, you gotta be careful when you come up off of something like this. You don't want to be pumping them for another project because that actually can fatigue them cause they get a lot of people asking them for a lot of money."

Carlos Baldovin: Especially, you know, that type of donor. Yeah. So I've been very intentional just leaving them be accept when we did our gala that we had in November, that there were there involved, engaged, they heard it felt good about it. And then that year end gift comes in, boom, we're good again. What I've done in these last six months, I've kind of left them be a little bit, but now I'm going to engage them again.

Shawn Saunders: I got you. So your prioritizing and it sounds like also that the ask that your doing-

Carlos Baldovin: I am-

Shawn Saunders: It's not just, it's strategic.

Carlos Baldovin: That's right.

Shawn Saunders: Right.

Carlos Baldovin: It's very strategic and I think a lot of times, especially in our work, people just keep pumping the same people the same time and it just, people just get worn out.

Shawn Saunders: Yeah there's so much noise-

Carlos Baldovin: I've heard it. They do. And, and a lot of these donors get pieces of mail or they get communicated to get phone calls or emails from people asking for money all the time. I mean, they tell me, "Carlos, I'm man, you're, I mean you're like the 10th one that sent me some sort of direct mail piece this month and I choose you because I trust in your local."

Shawn Saunders: Yeah, so Carlos and the last question I have is, what are your plans? Are you doing anything to like up? Are y'all making more investments in your development? Are you scaling up because you're seeing more growth opportunity? Tell us about that.

Carlos Baldovin: Yeah, obviously we are, I mean actually I was talking to my development director just this week, well one while at convention about just something I wanted to... I actually learned through the capital campaign model that you, that you all taught us. And I want to do another house gathering cause I really feel that some of these donors that got involved in the first project that we're working on this other project in a city nearby that I just mentioned you early in the podcast, that this donor's going to give all this money to fund it but I would love to get their friends and hanging out with them [crosstalk 00:20:42] like the country club or on the yacht or wherever on a vacations that I can get them. I can get them involved and engaged. So I'm planning on doing something like that.

Shawn Saunders: Cool.

Carlos Baldovin: So Kudos to you guys for teaching us something [crosstalk 00:20:56]

Shawn Saunders: There we go. [crosstalk 00:20:57]

Andrew Olsen: I've got one last question for you.

Carlos Baldovin: Yeah.

Andrew Olsen: Give us a word of encouragement for that executive director who's sitting with their board saying, I think we need to launch a capital campaign, but we're not really sure how to do it yet. Well, what, what would you...what's that word of encouragement or one or two recommendations you'd give them?

Carlos Baldovin: Yeah, you know I'd tell them is seek the Lord, make sure that the vision aligns with the need. Don't get involved in the something because when you go into capitol campaign, you've got to be all in. You can't be in or out. You gotta be all in, especially as the executive director and the board needs to back, at least to back these efforts. They need to be also on the front lines as well. Make sure that the Lord's calling to do that, that it matches the need, but also don't be too scared. Don't have fear to jump in.

Carlos Baldovin: If God's calling you to do it, just take a jump, take a leap. I mean, we were in that same spot that we, we didn't, okay... we were operating at this capacity. We know that this is a need. How just going, how these additional dollars, how are we going to raise them?

Carlos Baldovin: Well, God knew the need. He knew that we had, we knew we had to take a step of faith and we took it and we launched it and completed it. And you know what? It's been great. I mean there's those moments that I had, but don't be, don't be fearful. Don't be fearful of the unknown because there's a lot of unknowns when you're in a capital campaign.

Andrew Olsen: Absolutely.

Shawn Saunders: Yeah.

Carlos Baldovin: A lot of unknowns.

Shawn Saunders: That's so true.

Carlos Baldovin: And they only, become... things just become, you know, visual, I guess as you begin to take those steps because God meets you [crosstalk 00:22:40] as you're taking those steps.

Andrew Olsen: Very cool. Thank you.

Andrew Olsen: So if somebody that's listening wants to get in touch and learn more from your, just connect with you personally, what's the best way for them to do that?

Carlos Baldovin: You know, they can, they cannot go on online. Email me, see Baldovinos@themissionkc.org or call me at the office. We'll love to chat about the capital campaigns and what we learned and what we've seen our ministry grow its capacity. And that they can call me at (661) 325-0863.

Andrew Olsen: Awesome. Thank you so much for that.

Carlos Baldovin: Yeah, thank you guys for having me.

Shawn Saunders: Yeah, Thank you Carlos

Carlos Baldovin: Yes, sir.