

## GETTING A JUMP ON SERVICE WITH A BLUE FROG AUCTION

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Make your vision service-oriented, says John P. Kotter, author of a fine book on leadership entitled *The Heart of Change*. A Waco, TX, Covenant Group put its service-oriented vision into action recently in a creative way: they held a Great Frog Auction.

The results surprised and pleased a local social service agency that was having trouble raising money. The Waco folk didn't auction live frogs, but they had nearly every other kind. The church's minister, the Rev. Nathan Stone, explained in a newsletter column that a folk song about a "Big Blue Phrog" had become the church's theme song and blue frogs a sort of mascot. Looking for a project to do as a service to the community at large, a Covenant Group that calls itself "The Other Movie Group" decided to gather and auction off blue frogs to raise money for the Talitha Koum Institute, an innovative nurturing program for children and families in South Waco.

Stone wrote, "Well — just in case you missed it -- this was NOT a success. It was a roaring success! Ingrid Martine, co-facilitator of "The Other Movie Group," and I would have been happy if we'd raised \$300 or \$400. Instead, we raised \$1,700!"

About 65 people from the church showed up to bid on "50 or so of the zaniest blue frogs I have ever seen," Stone said, adding, "The Talitha Koum people who attended the auction were blown away. So was I. Most of all — we had a ball doing it. Everyone went away happy." Stone's assessment is exactly in line with what John P. Kotter would expect. He says: "The cynics are wrong: Most of us get a great feeling from helping other people. So you make the vision service-oriented, something with which people can identify.... This idea can work in manufacturing businesses, high-tech firms, financial services - nearly anywhere." (Pp., 72-73, *Heart of Change*.)

It can even work among Unitarian Universalists, which is one reason why service to one's church and to one's community are key elements of the Small Group Ministry plan.