

Equity, Access & Opportunity ::

**Stories of Impact in
the Greater Washington Region**

**The Community Foundation
for the National Capital Region**



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Imagine



Darrell Nelson is a five-year-old living in Washington Highlands, D.C. Hard times have hit Darrell's family in the past few years. Both parents lost their jobs within six short months. Subsequent job searches turned up zero leads; soon the Nelsons had to go to their neighborhood food bank for groceries for the first time in their family's history. Today, home foreclosure stands as another looming threat.

mission ::

The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region's mission is to strengthen the Washington metropolitan region by encouraging and supporting effective giving and by providing leadership on critical issues in our community.

The Nelsons are a fictional family, but their circumstances are very real. The fear and uncertainty that comes with being poor in the National Capital region have burdened thousands of families—from the District to Silver Spring, Maryland, to Fairfax, Virginia. We've heard too many variations of the Nelsons' story of persistent poverty and closed doors.

We want to help write a different story: one in which closed doors are opened and equity, access, and opportunity

are ensured not for some but for *all* residents in the Washington metropolitan area. Ultimately, this is about kids like Darrell Nelson and their families having a clear life path toward achieving economic security. We know this is only possible through quality education, job opportunities, and housing and food security—which is why our three focus areas are education, workforce development, and strengthening the safety net. 

Measurable Impact ::

What does achieving economic security look like for greater Washington's residents?

As examples, we offer three stories. In them, you'll see how we've identified the most urgent, pressing issues facing the greater Washington region and taken the lead on effective ways to address them. As the stories attest, we believe in long-term solutions—not quick fixes—and in approaches that reinforce one another and align with our economic security strategy.

Since 1973, we have been in the forefront in addressing community need and catalyzing change. These stories focus specifically on the impact of our work in the years after the 2008 economic downturn, a tumultuous period during which those keystones of economic security—quality education, the right job training, and basic needs such as housing and food—became more critical than ever. Although these accounts show remarkable perseverance in tough financial times, we want to stress that our work is not finished. We need to keep moving forward. These stories identify the ways in which our work is still unfolding.

Our strategic approach to creating impact in this region rests on six key principles.

1 We always think and act regionally

Being a hub of giving for greater Washington means we must be able to reach people like Darrell Nelson all across the region, in communities like Parkside/Kenilworth, Mohican Hills, and Annandale. Serving the region's 5.5 million residents, particularly the most underserved, means understanding both the regional and community-specific needs of these communities. To that end, we operate in communities throughout Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Northern Virginia, with two local affiliates under The Community Foundation's umbrella—**The Community Foundation for Montgomery County** and **The Community Foundation for Prince George's County**. Through its affiliates, The Community Foundation can fulfill its mission by raising local philanthropic capital to address the specific needs of the areas we serve. Community issues shift from neighborhood to neighborhood; having local expertise in our service areas allows us to address them most efficiently and effectively.

2 Collaboration means "rolling up our sleeves"

Carrying out our vision of economic security for all residents demands leadership. While our giving of more than \$50 million in annual grants helps our partners carry out their missions, this funding only represents part of our work. Beyond our giving, our staff continuously build and maintain relationships with donors, nonprofits, businesses and government—establishing the strong connections that are the lifeblood of effective collaboration. Bringing together relevant partners on community solutions does not happen automatically; it emerges from the daily work of recruiting new partners and strengthening existing relationships. As Eshauna Smith, President of Urban Alliance, explains, Foundation staff "don't mind rolling up their sleeves. They can work with you on a staff-to-staff level in a way that's always helpful."

This staff-to-staff and one-to-one approach of ours takes many forms. We work alongside colleague funders like us, leading and participating in coalitions to move the region forward on big issues. We also work with individual donors, empowering them to lead the way in their own

In FY2013, the Foundation and its donors awarded nearly

\$90 million

in grants to nonprofit organizations in the Greater Washington region and beyond





communities. **Our Neighbors in Need Fund**, highlighted in one of the following stories, has been a great example of our donor-led collaborations. We laid the groundwork—vetting organizations to ensure best results and connecting donors to their interests—but donors ultimately assembled the resources that reached residents in need of quality emergency services (such as food, clothing, shelter and emergency financial assistance for rent, utilities and prescriptions) and strengthened the safety net.

Finally, we work alongside everyday residents and community organizers, gaining ground on key issues through their engagement, empowerment, and leadership. Shedding light on a municipal budget issue or organizing

students to demand better schools requires a resident-directed agenda. We have served as the resource center that allows community members to mobilize and generate solutions to the problems they have identified.

3 We take calculated risks because we have to

Being risk-averse is not an option when it comes to changing the status quo. To expand equity, access, and opportunity in the Washington region, we often have to lead the way into new territory, as we have in education organizing and workforce development. Although we may initially move with limited funds, we move anyway, with faith that we can put often-overlooked issues such as

race and equity on the public radar.

We have called on funders, partners, community leaders, and other advocates to join us—and they have. Regarding The Community Foundation’s openness to risk, Carmen James Lane, of our funding partner **The Meyer Foundation**, explains: “For us to strengthen educational and career pathways for D.C. youth, there’s so much that has to change. This is hard work. It’s pretty courageous for a foundation to take it on.”

4 We invest in advocacy for strong returns

As a regional leader, we see the need to fight continuously for the preservation of local and state funding for critical safety net services. This priority has intensified as a result of the recession, in which the community has faced constant threats to public funding.

Speaking out on an issue pays off. One of the following stories covers the success of the first-ever regionally coordinated budget advocacy campaign, **Think Twice**. The purpose of the Think Twice campaign (led by the **Nonprofit Roundtable** and the **Center for Nonprofit Advancement** and funded by The Community Foundation) is to preserve, restore, and secure additional local government funding for nonprofits and the region’s safety net. From Northern Virginia to suburban Maryland, the Campaign’s network encompasses three state budgets and seven local jurisdictions.

Through a modest grant of \$40,000 in 2011, efforts by the Think Twice campaign and its partners across the region led to the restoration of increases in funding totaling more than \$45 million in critical safety net services. The Community Foundation served as lead funder of the campaign and played a key role in the



development of a strong collaboration among budget advocacy efforts across all jurisdictions.

An effective service delivery system needs to have advocates supporting it. So we’re taking a long-haul approach as we both support advocacy and practice it ourselves.

5 We respond quickly to emerging needs

Taking the “long-haul” approach, however, does not keep us from responding quickly to community need. In late 2008, an increasing number of safety net organizations in our region were seeing a steep increase in demand for services. Many nonprofits were reporting serving as many as 60 percent more people than in previous years. They were noticing more and more middle-income residents in need of emergency support, many of whom had never needed these services before. With the Great Recession affecting the entire region, we knew this crisis needed a timely yet effective response.

We mobilized donors, funders, and nonprofit partners to form the Neighbors in Need Fund. Neighbors in Need was a massive campaign to move grant funds out the door quickly,

easing nonprofit leaders’ anxieties about their funding. “We were all sort of on pins and needles about reliable funding sources,” remembers George Jones, executive director of **Bread for the City** in the District. “It wasn’t just that [the Foundation] created this, but that it had a streamlined approach. That was really critical.”

6 We know how far we have to go

Despite great gains, our work is not finished; we won’t be satisfied until every resident in greater Washington achieves economic security.

The road to impact can be long and difficult. In some cases, our best course of action is laying the necessary groundwork. Our work in increasing high school graduation rates fits that description. Recognizing that the community’s voice on this issue was muted, we focused our energies on empowering education advocates—particularly parents, teachers, and students. Today, graduation rates are still too low, but we now see a more vibrant spirit of advocacy that will drive us closer to our college and career readiness goals for youth.

In some cases, the road to measurable impact also means

having to look more closely at an urgent issue such as affordable housing. To better understand housing security in our region, we recently commissioned (with support from **The Morris & Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation**) a comprehensive report on the region’s shelter and housing system. The goals of the study are to identify supply and demand for housing along the continuum (shelters, transitional housing, stable rental, homeownership); how key housing policies and practices differ across the region’s jurisdictions; current resources (local, state, federal government, private, etc.); and best practices. “Our goal is for the study to educate key stakeholders about the system and best practices, identify opportunities for strategic investment, and help leverage resources,” says Silvana Straw, Senior Philanthropic Services Officer for The Community Foundation.

And there’s more to be done. “We will not be satisfied until we’ve assembled a mix of resources, knowledge, and leadership that achieves real change in the greater Washington Region,” says Community Foundation President Terri Lee Freeman. ❦

Opening Workforce Pathways

After learning her work hours would be reduced, Carolina Cadena had to make some decisions.

First, she and her two young children moved into her parents' home so she could save money. Next she enrolled in an office-skills training program called **Training Futures**, funded by The Community Foundation.

That second decision was not easy for Cadena. By the time she had started the program, her father had lost his job, leaving the family scared they might lose their home as well. Committing to the 25-week training meant this single mother somehow had to juggle coursework, family responsibilities, and a night job. But Cadena pushed through, finishing Training Futures, and is now on track to become a licensed social worker.

As a regional leader on workforce development, we have heard many stories like Cadena's and have witnessed the perseverance of those working toward a family-sustaining career. We want to reward that dedication. A key part of our mission is helping low-income workers increase their skills and credentials so they can achieve family economic security. We believe this is possible

largely through our partnerships with effective programs like Training Futures.

The national conversation about the recent recession shed light on the general impact of unemployment when the unemployment rate ballooned to 10 percent. The media paid less attention to the recession's disproportionate impact on low-income workers or on local communities, like a D.C. ward where unemployment climbed to three times the national average. Even in boom years, low-income workers in the greater Washington region struggle to find security without access to the right training or supportive services.

What does unemployment or underemployment look like for those with limited English and no high school diploma? And what supports and training can help a hardworking individual chart a stable career path that supports his or her family? These are the questions that drive workforce development at **Northern Virginia Family Service**—which offers Training Futures—and organizations that we support throughout the greater Washington region. They drive our own efforts in workforce development, including the local and regional investments we make in people, programs, and policies. The end

goal, as with all our efforts, is economic security.

In Fairfax County, Training Futures is on the right track to helping people achieve economic security. Since its creation in 1996, the program has positively affected approximately 1,500 unemployed or underpaid adults (see adjacent chart). Much of that success can be attributed to a partnership with **Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA)**. Through co-enrollment, larger numbers of trainees began acquiring college credits—as many as 17—while they received job training. And thanks to a recent Community Foundation grant, Training Futures graduates now earn a NOVA certificate in Business Information Technology, recognizing the rigor of the program.

Credentialing is a priority for us. "Whether it's a certificate or an associate's or a bachelor's, we know from an increasing body of research that there really is a tipping point in terms of economic payoffs for those with a post-secondary credential," says Sarah Oldmixon, Director of Workforce Initiatives for The Community Foundation.

Recognizing that the traditional community college may pose barriers to some, the program expands

Training Futures

Success of Graduates in the Workplace, 2009 – 2012

225 Total Graduates



Pre - TF Average Wage \$8.62

Post - TF Average Wage

\$14.60



through an arrangement in which individuals are simultaneously admitted as trainees and college students. Essentially, the Training Futures classroom acts as a small satellite campus of NOVA. Trainees get assistance applying for and receiving financial aid while they learn in “a more culturally sensitive, community-based environment,” says Oldmixon.

Bill Browning, a former program manager of Training Futures, sees a marked difference in participants before and after the skills training. “Their self-image is transformed,” he says. “And it’s not by just the training, but all the other supports around it.” Bill is now with the Aspen Institute, helping scale the Training Futures model across the country.

Mutual assistance is one of those other supports at Training Futures. A peer network of trainees “describes itself as a family and acts like a family,” says Browning, with each cohort making sure no one is left behind. They might deliver homework to a colleague in the hospital or take up a collection for someone who suddenly became homeless. In Cadena’s case, she has encouraged six colleagues from Fairfax County’s Head Start program to enroll in NOVA’s Adult Career Pathways

program. “She is on fire, a one-woman revolution for her community,” says Browning.

The economic security that students at Training Futures can eventually achieve is not possible without a reliable revenue stream, particularly during times of decreased public funding. That is why we launched

To be effective, we believe that the innovative bridge between nonprofit and community college must take root throughout the region.

the **Greater Washington Workforce Development Collaborative**. Along with both providing and attracting workforce development resources—a total of **\$16 million since 2007**—this initiative has pushed for programs that deliver the best training and policies that expand career opportunities region-wide (see adjacent chart).

Even with its success, Training Futures can help only so many individuals become career-ready. To be effective, we believe that the innovative bridge between nonprofit

and community college must take root throughout the region. To that end, we are supporting similar partnerships with **Prince George’s Community College, Montgomery College, and the University of the District of Columbia Community College**. Our plan anticipates that up to 500 unemployed, underemployed, and low-income individuals will access post-secondary education, acquire post-secondary credentials, and launch careers in key regional industries.

The employment-related gains that we have seen in the region have largely resulted from what Angela Jones Hackley, Vice President of Philanthropic Services for The Community Foundation, sees as a shift in how leaders handle workforce investment in the region. It recognizes the pivotal role employers play and emphasizes training *for the jobs that are available*. The success of Foundation-supported programs, like **The Training Source** in Prince George’s County and **Building Futures** in the District, have proven this logic, building pipelines with local employers and focusing on industry sectors like construction and healthcare that research has deemed worth the targeted investment.

Beyond investing in people and

Our Workforce Development Impact

2007 – Present

Launching Careers

647

individuals secured employment

49

entered paid apprenticeships

Enhancing Skills

562

earned a credential

Career Pathways

59

earned a promotion

45

increased from part-time to full-time employment

150

obtained a raise

A Closer Look at Skills Training Success

For hundreds of graduates, the economic payoffs of Training Futures are clear. According to a three-year data study of Training Futures that was conducted by the Aspen Institute and spotlighted by the New York Times:

A continual commitment to refining Training Futures pushed its leaders to think about the impact the program could have on individuals before and after they enter the classrooms. For example, poor command of English among immigrant trainees was a common factor in the decision to turn away many Training Futures applicants. To address the problem, Training Futures and NOVA piloted a four-month English as a Second Language (ESL) bridge program. There have also been post-training program supports, including a three-week internship with area employees and a service called “Getting and Keeping a Job,” through which volunteers from the business community practice job interviewing with trainees and guide them through the on-site job fairs held at Northern Virginia Family Service.

94%

Ninety-four percent of enrolled participants successfully completed the program, one of the nation’s top success rates for job-training programs serving low-income workers.

84%

Eighty-four percent landed new jobs following the program.

\$6,000

The newly employed reported average wage gains of \$3 per hour over previous earnings, which equates to a \$6,000 increase in annual earnings.

programs, our investments and our work show the value that good policies and strong leadership bring in increasing family economic security in the region. The following is a short overview of just a few policy-focused endeavors we’ve undertaken to secure better opportunities for low-income workers:

- Before 2009, D.C. was the only major American city without a community college. To expand post-secondary opportunities to D.C. residents, we seeded the work that could create such an institution, including commissioning a feasibility study that steered the launching of the University of the District of Columbia Community College. We and our partners advocate on an ongoing basis to ensure that the college fulfills its mission to provide career pathways.
- The Community Foundation’s Greater Washington Workforce Development Collaborative identified a huge disconnect between business needs versus job training offerings in



Beyond investing in people and programs, our investments and our work show the value that good policies and strong leadership bring in increasing family economic security in the region.

the District. Working with advocates like **DC Appleseed**, we published research and persistently promoted a better connection between these two efforts. The results were 1) the establishment of a **Workforce Intermediary** in early 2013 to help employers and job-training organizations in the community work together more effectively; and 2) a reinvigorated **Workforce Investment**

Council, stationed in the deputy mayor’s office, so that job-training and job-matching processes deliver better results for District workers and employers.

- Before 2012, Northern Virginia differed from other communities in the region in that it lacked an expert voice on workforce policy and other economic security issues. “Northern Virginia needed a way to exercise its power, but there was no multi-issue policy group,” said Rubie Coles, Senior Program Associate of the **Moriah Fund**, one of our funding partners. Working with other organizations, our support helped an established policy organization, the

Commonwealth Institute, to branch out and open a field office in Northern Virginia. Now we can expect more public attention to policy impacts on low- and moderate-income residents in the area.

These multifaceted efforts boil down to being truly regional in scope and acting directly on behalf of residents like Carolina Cardena who are ready to work. This is an approach that, according to Community Foundation President Terri Lee Freeman, “utilizes the people in the community to do the jobs in the community.”



Strengthening the Safety Net

While the greater Washington region has one of the strongest economies in the nation, poverty continues to grow and the demand for safety net services continues to increase—all while resources drastically decrease.

According to the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government's 2012 Count of Homeless Persons, there are 11,830 homeless people in our region, with children and youth representing 29 percent of the homeless population. There is an increase in the number of homeless families, homeless youth, and homeless people who are employed. Homelessness among the region's families has increased nearly 23 percent since 2008, compared to 1.2 percent for the nation since 2009. The region's overall increase in family homelessness is attributed to the impact of the economic crisis and the lack of affordable housing.

In Prince George's County, the need is great—and we responded. Through systems reform grants to the **Human Services Coalition (HSC)**, we are helping the county's **Homeless Services Partnership** achieve its goal of reducing and ultimately eliminating homelessness in the county. Created

in 1995, the Partnership is made up of over 100 homeless-services providers.

"If it weren't for The Community Foundation, we would not have initiated a systematic ten-year plan to end homelessness in Prince George's County today," says Jerry Adams, former Director of the Human Services Coalition of Prince George's County.

"Homeless people in Prince George's County are somewhat invisible," added Adams. "You don't see homeless people sleeping on grates or park benches as you would in the city." At the same time, a number of factors—returning veterans who can't find work, homeless youth who sleep on different sofas every night, residents with chronic health issues, record numbers of foreclosures, and the lack of quality affordable housing—have driven the issue of homelessness to the forefront of the county's policy discussions.

With funds from The Community Foundation, HSC (working with the Homeless Services Partnership) evaluated the state of homelessness in the county by gathering data on current services, developing a demographic portrait of who is homeless and analyzing where the

gaps are. Originally, HSC's goal was to use that data to improve the traditional Continuum of Care model that guides and tracks homeless participants through a comprehensive array of services and housing. Instead, HSC determined that a proven approach known as Housing First—which provides homeless people with permanent housing quickly, then makes supportive services available as needed—would be more effective. The Housing First model has a very high success rate for housing and *keeping housed* people who have been homeless. Housing First programs in other communities boast success rates as high as 85 percent. Studies also show that Housing First is less expensive than traditional approaches.

HSC applauds The Community Foundation for recognizing the need for system reform in Prince George's County. Working with The Community Foundation, **Freddie Mac**, the **National Alliance to End Homelessness**, and Prince George's County officials, HSC launched a Housing First Initiative that will reduce the time people spend in a shelter and prevent others from becoming homeless altogether. There are already significant results, such as a 57 percent reduction in the length

of time families lived in shelters and transitional housing over a three-year period. The initiative has also added services for homeless youth where there had previously been none—a 14-bed transitional housing program, a 20-bed emergency shelter, and a four-bed host family program.

In Prince George's County, intermediaries like HSC and the **Partnership for Prince George's County** play a pivotal role in strengthening both nonprofits and the overall nonprofit service delivery system. In addition to the advocacy that HSC *supports*, there's the advocacy that HSC *conducts* as a voice for the county's young nonprofit sector. "This is what we call 'big-A' advocacy," says Amina Anderson, Senior Program Officer of The Community Foundation for Prince George's County. When state assembly or city council bills threaten to strip critical funding to organizations and the crucial services they provide, HSC is there to assemble the experts and the advocates to provide personal testimony.

In addition to "big-A" advocacy, another key feature of an effective safety net is capacity building to strengthen the providers that make up the safety net service-delivery system.



Our Regional Safety Net Impact 2009 - 2012

Helped 118 safety net providers meet need

Supported basic needs for hundreds of thousands of adults and children

Prevented hundreds of people from losing their homes



Shepherd's Cove/ United Communities Against Poverty ::

A Member of the Homeless Services Partnership

During the onset of the economic crisis in 2008 and 2009, Shepherd's Cove, a member of the Homeless Services Partnership, was working over capacity to serve the newly homeless pouring through its doors.

Statistics confirmed the firsthand reality observed by this Capitol Heights, Maryland-based shelter. The *Washington Post* reported that between 2008 and 2009, the number of family members receiving shelter services in Prince George's County rose from 19 percent of the total number seeking assistance to a shocking 55 percent.

Women and children come to Shepherd's Cove, a 24-hour, 365-days-a-year facility, for the essentials: emergency shelter, three nutritious meals a day, and wrap-around services like transitional housing, health care, and employment.

Through the Homeless Services Partnership, women in Prince George's County now receive self-advocacy training, another essential for those whose well-being depends on finding and making the most of basic services.

"Certainly homelessness is the driver for these women and for us right now," says Hillary Lindeman, HSC's End Family Homelessness Project Director. "But the advocacy skills they get translate to advocating for their children in full as they negotiate all kinds of systems."

We know that solutions like ending homelessness hinge on a dual focus of delivering critical services while at the same time strengthening the system that delivers those services. We want organizations of all sizes—whether they are frontline agencies like Shepherd's Cove or coalitions serving the whole region—to embrace this dual mission.

To fulfill their missions, young as well as established organizations often need assistance with fundraising, developing their boards, and strategic planning. To help strengthen a relatively young nonprofit sector, the Partnership for Prince George's County has turned to successful local leaders. Kim Rhim of the Training Source shares the practical knowledge that she has gleaned as a longtime director of a job-training organization. "Kim knows what it is to grow a nonprofit because that's what she's done," says HSC Executive Director Donna Mason.

This work in Prince George's County has many parallels in each of the communities we serve. Around the region, we have identified and supported community organizations that share our priority for not only serving the most vulnerable, but also advocating for them in a way that is both empowering and promotes systemic reform. In Montgomery County, **IMPACT Silver Spring's** search for an effective way to collaborate with municipal government led to an innovative partnership with the **County Department of Health and Human Services**. Through door-to-door canvassing, outreach volunteers have reached out to isolated immigrant communities to raise awareness about critical services. Bread for the City, an organization that provides comprehensive services, empowers the D.C. residents it serves by recruiting them as leaders. Its board of directors has undergone a transformation: now 10 clients—more than half the board—provide organizational leadership.

We have faith in the impact of community-based advocacy efforts like **Fair Budget Coalition** in Washington, D.C., and **Interfaith Works** in Montgomery County.

We are one of the lead investors in advocacy efforts in the region. We have invested in advocacy to



The Sharing Montgomery Fund ::

To respond effectively to increasing poverty in the region, we challenged donors to give not only their money, but also their time and input on local organizations and their effectiveness. The Sharing Montgomery Fund, which has awarded \$3 million to improve the quality of life of Montgomery County residents, was developed by donors and facilitated by a volunteer committee. We will keep looking to donor-led efforts like the Sharing Montgomery Fund to respond to the ever-changing local conditions that residents face.

preserve public funding and improve policies for the safety net, human services, and advocacy related to unemployment insurance, food stamps, parent organizing and childcare, homelessness, affordable housing, and foreclosure prevention. Our grants have resulted in preserving public funding; policy changes related to the safety net; a stronger, more

"If it weren't for The Community Foundation, we would not be initiating a systematic ten-year plan to end homelessness in Prince George's County today."

diverse advocacy infrastructure in the region, including non-traditional advocates such as consumers, business leaders, and other concerned residents; increased public awareness of needs in the region and the safety net resources required to meet them; and increased coverage of safety net issues in the media.

Our grant of \$40,000 for the first regional budget advocacy campaign

yielded a return of \$45 million in preserved public funding for the safety net. In this case, we coupled our advocacy-based funding with advocacy we carried out ourselves. In one of our biggest communications campaigns ever, Terri Lee Freeman appealed to the public—and particularly to donors—to speak out against impending cuts in municipal budgets. "I think when institutions that represent more than just themselves take a stand on an issue, people pay attention," she explained.

Any discussion about regional impact should highlight the efforts of our donors and funding partners, who certainly stepped up as we developed the Neighbors in Need Fund, our largest grantmaking program in Foundation history. Through donations large and small, the campaign has raised \$5 million since 2008. To date, more than \$4.7 million has been awarded to 118 safety net organizations during a time of heightened demand for basic services. As a result, hundreds of thousands of people in the region have received food, shelter, clothing, foreclosure prevention, and healthcare.

We also sped up our grantmaking process through the Neighbors in Need Fund. This was critical during a time when cash-starved nonprofits had no time to wait for funding to arrive. "We changed our entire grantmaking process for Neighbors in Need so that we could get money out the door in less than three months," said Angela Jones Hackley, Vice President of Philanthropic Services.

We will also keep applying that dual focus of supporting service delivery and strengthening the system that delivers critical services. For example, in late 2012, as part of a decision to re-evaluate how to support impact, we commissioned a comprehensive study on housing that was the first to survey the whole region. "What we're trying to get at through the data collection is a clear distinction between what people think homelessness and housing security is and what it actually is," says Freeman. "Knowing that distinction, as well as the gaps between resources and critical services, will help all regional investors, including us, fund for greater impact." ::

Expanding Opportunity in Education ::

Nehmias is a 17-year-old attending Roosevelt High School. His primary language is Spanish, making him one of the 5,165 English as a Second Language (ESL) students in District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS).

Nehmias's biggest challenge in school is the lack of interpretation services available to limited-English-speaking students and their families. Roosevelt has only one multilingual counselor serving 497 students. Nehmias's mother has come to Roosevelt three times, the last time to get a signature from Nehmias on an important document he forgot to sign. Roosevelt staff seated her with a security guard and never directed her to Nehmias because the school staff lacked translation services for her.

Nehmias's story is one shared by thousands of ESL students within DCPS who struggle to navigate a challenging public school system to achieve a diploma that is critical to their post-secondary economic success. Without critical supports like translation, as well as access to quality teaching and learning, students like Nehmias will struggle to graduate high school and will drop out.

We have refused to accept the chronically low graduation rates in the region's jurisdictions and the more than 25,000 disconnected youth in the region—those aged 16 to 24 who are out of school and out of work. The District has the largest number of disconnected youth, estimated at 10,000. Clearly, youth can't contribute to or benefit from the region's prosperity until our systems deliver on a commitment of providing every student with a safe, accessible, academically challenging, and inspiring learning experience.

The Community Foundation understands the problem. We've also identified a collective response, one that gathers all relevant partners to the decision table, including caring community members. This response is driven by strategies like civic engagement and community organizing, which are pivotal in expanding economic security for youth and residents in general. At the core of this approach is our belief that systemically organizing low-income youth and families is an essential part of influencing public and charter school programs, as well as advocating for policies that improve the academic and social development of children of color. Organizing is defined as a resident-led process

to identify, analyze, and act on the issues that affect them. Organizing is essential to ensuring that change is implemented and sustained.

For the past five years, we have been investing in community organizing for education reform and have seen slow but steady gains in our work on behalf of youth. Back in 2007, at a time when a meager 9 percent of incoming freshmen were completing college within five years of graduating high school, the demand to improve DCPS was high but decision-makers' interest in community involvement was low. We were struck by the lack of organizations working to empower those most affected by a struggling DCPS—the students, their families, and their communities.

We sought to work with nonprofits that had a commitment to developing the capacity of students and families to inform decisions about policies, programs, and practices. Given the complexity of the issue and the work to be undertaken, we partnered with nine other local and national foundations as well as donors of The Community Foundation to lead this work. We developed the **Collaborative for Education Organizing (CEO)**, an innovative partnership of funders working collectively to ensure the nonprofit capacity needed to

Education Organizing :: Policy Impact

\$1

\$3

Youth Education Alliance leverages \$3 for every \$1 invested

\$1

\$14

Many Languages One Voice leverages \$14 for every \$1 invested

support students', parents', and other community members' ability to organize for education reform efforts.

CEO made multi-year investments that included general operating support and capacity-building grants to five nonprofits: **DC VOICE, Many Languages One Voice (MLOV), Empower DC, Critical Exposure, and Youth Education Alliance.**

MLOV created SMART, the Student Multi-Ethnic Action Research Team, at five DCPS high schools, including Roosevelt. Nehmias joined SMART, along with his fellow limited-English proficient student colleagues and their parents, to address issues of language access to educational services (bilingual guidance

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counselors, for example). The SMART program has helped schools to recognize the issues and challenges facing limited-English-proficient students, as well as inspiring these students to play an active role in making their schools more responsive to these challenges. SMART member Matteus, also a DCPS student, said, "Most ESL students are shy and don't speak up, but SMART gives them a chance to discuss their issues... we help them and bring the issues back to the coalition."

Through conversations with DCPS leadership, including the Chancellor, as well as testimony at D.C. City Council meetings, SMART secured a \$4.5 million increase in public funding for support services for ESL students.



MLOV leveraged \$14 against each dollar granted by the Foundation. As a result of the work of all the nonprofits funded by CEO:

❖❖ **Six hundred residents engaged.**

More than 600 parents, students and community residents are engaged in community organizing for education reform work in the District. In both traditional and public charter schools, these individuals are guiding conversations on reform and making change for their communities.

❖❖ **Achieved policy wins.** The Youth Education Alliance secured funding to ensure that the guidance-counselor-to-student ratio would be no greater than 1:250 at Wilson, Ballou, and Anacostia high schools and \$1 million in funding for professional development for DCPS guidance counselors to ensure that the quantity

and quality of counseling available is superior. With the addition of MLOV's policy win noted above, grants from the Foundation leveraged \$17 in public funding for every \$1 invested.

❖❖ **Doubled the number of organizers and nonprofits engaged in organizing.**

There are four organizations with dedicated organizing staff engaged in mobilizing students and parents in community organizing efforts. While this may seem small, when the Foundation started its work there were only two, without staff dedicated specifically to their education work.

❖❖ **Leveraged over \$2.2 million in philanthropic funding.** The Foundation invested more than \$2.8 million and leveraged more than \$2.2 million in funding from foundation and donor partners. These new funds represent the single largest direct and focused

investment in education organizing in the District's history, as well as one of the largest local investments in community organizing generally.

As the Foundation began to approach CEO's sunset point in 2012, we realized that a collaborative strategy alone would not achieve our ambitious goal to ensure that all young people graduate from high school ready for post-secondary opportunities. A collective impact strategy had to be implemented, one based on the premise that large-scale social change comes from better cross-sector coordination rather than from the isolated intervention of individual organizations.

We used every strategy in our toolkit—convening, technical assistance, advocacy, grantmaking, and capacity building—to catalyze cross-sector engagement, working from the notion that a cradle-to-career initiative must be implemented. In April 2012, Mayor Gray and his Deputy Mayor of Education announced the creation of a cradle-to-career initiative called **Raise D.C.**, as well as

the nonprofit, philanthropic, public-sector, and private-sector leaders behind it. The citywide plan has laid out five goals with measurable

For the past five years, we have been investing in community organizing for education reform and have seen slow but steady gains in our work on behalf of youth.

outcomes and targets to ensure that all District youth are career-ready by age 24. The collective leading Raise D.C. has recognized that meeting the five goals greatly depends on aligning with the kinds of on-the-ground initiatives that the Foundation helped to seed.

The measurable targets that are now holding District leaders more accountable mark a step toward real gains for D.C. youth. We funded the production of annual Raise

D.C. report cards so that students, parents, community members, and all leaders in the region can chart the progress of District schools and other institutions with regard to student success. With the first Baseline Report Card released in February 2013, the onus is now on Raise D.C. to make the steps necessary to meet its goals by 2017.

The Raise D.C. Executive Team, including Terri Lee Freeman, will not celebrate fully until the numbers at every critical point in a student's growth improve. We will continue investing in a collective-impact strategy in the District of Columbia and other jurisdictions until the number of disconnected youth in the region decreases and the number of young people who are college- and career-ready by age 24 increases. ❖❖





The Community Foundation ::

We are a community of givers, dedicated to inspiring and creating change across the Washington region and beyond. The Foundation, and our two regional affiliate foundations—The Community Foundation for Montgomery County and The Community Foundation for Prince George's County—are part of a network of some 700 community foundations nationwide, each a tax-exempt, public charity made up of charitable giving funds established by individuals, families, corporations and other organizations. We currently manage more than 700 donor funds with assets totaling more than \$326 million. We are the largest funder of nonprofit organizations in the metropolitan Washington region, with annual grants of more than \$90 million.

We were founded in 1973 by a group of visionary leaders committed to bettering the Washington metropolitan area through philanthropy.

Over the years, our board of trustees has included such prominent Washingtonians as Katherine Graham, John Hechinger, Jr., Eleanor Holmes Norton, R. Robert Linowes, Mario Morino, Lawrence Hough, Victoria Sant, Lee Folger and Henry Strong, to name just a few. This tradition continues today with our current Board of Trustees consisting of a diverse, volunteer group of Washington-area citizens representing excellence in the corporate, education, nonprofit and philanthropic sectors.

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