

# NFG REPORTS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD FUNDERS GROUP

## Partnerships for Change: Community-Union Collaboration in Public Education

By Leigh Dingerson

Plenty of blame gets served up when it comes to explaining why our public schools -- particularly those that serve predominantly low-income children and children of color -- don't provide a better education. Superintendents blame the state for not providing enough funding; principals blame teachers; teachers blame parents; parents blame teachers. It is an unfortunate cycle, and one that fails to result in any real change for the millions of children who are struggling in our nation's urban public schools. And, because there are kernels of truth in everyone's finger-pointing, it's often hard to get past it and down to the real work of supporting our public schools and making them serve students better.

There's good news, however. Refusing to accept the common wisdom that parents and educators are at odds when it comes to priorities for public school change, a handful of community organizations are developing tentative but exciting relationships with their local teachers unions. Together, these constituencies are identifying and working toward substantive school change.

The Neighborhood Funders Group has been part of an exciting project to learn from and support these "Partnerships for Change."

Early in 2002, a small group of foundation officers, including NFG's Spence Limbocker, began a series of conversations with community organizers and teachers union officials about their common interests in public school reform and the places where joint work seemed to be emerging.

In July 2002, the Center for Community Change (CCC) was selected to plan and coordinate a two-day meeting to bring together some of the leaders in these initiatives, to learn from them and identify ways to support their efforts. Moving beyond the discussion stage, the foundation officers, organizers and union representatives formed a Planning Committee to help shape the event.

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## Nonprofit Executive Transition: Considerations for Funders

By Jan Masaoka

Donna Stark was worried. The National Economic Development & Law Center (NEDLC) was losing its 17-year, highly respected leader, James Head. NEDLC is a "mission critical" organization for the Annie E. Casey Foundation, where Donna is the director of Leadership Development. All of the research and her own knowledge of the organization pointed to a period of extreme vulnerability for NEDLC, similar to times when she had seen many organizations come close to failing. Donna decided to explore making a \$25,000 grant to NEDLC so it could bring in a consultant to provide executive transition services.

"I thought about what other kinds of grants we've made to NEDLC," said

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# Report to Members

By Maria Mottola and Frank Sanchez, Co-Chairs

Greetings and happy New Year to you all! We hope that you and your families enjoyed a measure of peace over the holidays. We begin this time of renewal with an even stronger commitment to the communities we care about and to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

Our collective efforts have yielded tremendous results over the past twelve months. Here are some highlights.

## NFG Annual Conference

Public Responsibility/ Private Initiatives: Increasing Needs, Decreasing Resources was the theme of the 2003 NFG annual conference. The conference focused on the challenges facing foundations in doing more with less. More than 200 foundation leaders from across the country explored innovative strategies designed by colleagues in response to the changing economy and its impact on low- and moderate-income communities. Our message reaches larger audiences with each event, and based on the positive feedback we continue to receive, we have every reason to believe that this trend will continue into the New Year.

## NFG Public Policy Papers

*Affordable Rental Housing and the American Dream: The Role for Foundations* poses the question: what can foundations do to begin addressing the rental housing challenges facing our country today? Despite greater emphasis on homeownership,

rental housing remains a critical part of the U.S. housing mix, with affordability as the most significant challenge. This paper outlines the work many foundations are doing to address these challenges, and argues that stable, affordable rental housing for low-income families is inextricably linked to healthy neighborhoods.

*Ending Homelessness: The Philanthropic Role* was a collaborative effort between NFG and the National Foundation Advisory Group for Ending Homelessness. This guide was the third in a series of papers published by NFG to help grantmakers understand affordable housing public policy issues and to encourage sustained, strategic public and private investments in housing and other measures that address homelessness. It summarizes key recommendations from foundation staff and experts on what philanthropy can do to help end homelessness, and provides concrete examples of involvement by foundations of all sizes.

## NFG Issue Brief

*Evaluation: The Good News for Funders* examined the benefits of program evaluation using the participatory approach. The publication can assist foundations in selecting an evaluation process that helps achieve their organizational goals while building knowledge among grantees and improving relationships between grantors and grantees.

## Membership

NFG's membership is strong and continues to grow. While many of our members experienced grant-making and/or program cutbacks, we continued to receive both human and financial resources to sustain our work. We thank the many volunteers who, throughout the year, have offered their time, talents and expertise to make NFG a strong, credible voice in the philanthropic community.

As we turn our attention to 2004 and beyond, we begin the year with excitement and anticipation. The Board of Directors, at their annual retreat, finalized the next ***NFG Plan for the Future 2004-2006***. Our mission and core values remain constant: to increase philanthropic investment in community-based efforts to organize and improve the economic and social fabric of low- and moderate-income urban neighborhoods and rural communities. In addition to our ongoing activities -- including *NFG Reports*, public policy papers, the annual conference and workshops at Council on Foundations conferences -- we look to expand our programmatic and professional development offerings.

Based on the feedback we have received from NFG members through focus groups and our member survey, NFG's program offerings over the next three years will include:

- ♦ **The Community Giving Resource:** In February, at the Family Foundations conference, NFG will launch its new Community Giving Resource, which was developed to help donors and family foundations invest in community-based

organizations and activities. During a reception at the conference, Tony Pipa (NFG board member) and Susan Beaird will unveil this new resource. To learn more about the donor resource program please see "The Community Giving Resource: New NFG Project Will Help Donors and Their Families Build Strong Neighborhoods and Communities" on page 6 of this issue.

- ♦ **Regional gatherings:** In collaboration with other philanthropic organizations, NFG will organize special educational and networking opportunities around the country.

- ♦ **New staff training:** NFG will develop training modules for foundation staff who are new to community-based grantmaking.

We are committed to providing a variety of programs and activities for our membership and hope to expand our collaborations with other networks of grantmakers. Through our working groups we will continue to provide opportunities for funders to connect and develop programs in specific issue areas. You can learn more about the future direction of NFG from the final written version of the ***Plan for the Future 2004-2006***, which will be available in February.

Thank you to our colleagues on the board who work tirelessly not only to maintain the high level of productivity but also to create even more channels and outlets to spread our message and gain support. We welcome any comments and/or feedback you wish to share.

Finally, we especially want to thank the many volunteers who

make this work possible. Countless volunteer hours have gone into producing each publication, program and event. Our annual conference committee of volunteers, chaired by Henry Allen of the Hyams Foundation and Regina McGraw of the Wieboldt Foundation, is now hard at work planning for the 2004 Annual Conference, to be held in Boston, September 13-15. We anticipate another timely and thought-provoking program. Stay tuned for program updates.

No organization can thrive without the continued support of its members. The success of the Neighborhood Funders Group is due to the commitment and dedication of each and every one of you. Your feedback and devotion have made our collective efforts extremely productive, and we hope you continue to offer advice, comments and suggestions for the future. Thank you for your support and we look forward to another exciting year! ☺

## Building A Table For Dialogue

The committee's vision for the event incorporated multiple interests. We wanted to provide an opportunity for union leaders and organizers, teachers and parents to learn from and build relationships with each other. We wanted fledgling partnerships around the country to share experiences with each other. And we wanted to be able to learn from their stories. We wanted lessons that would be useful in other school districts, and ideas for how funders, parent organizations and others could support and encourage such partnerships.

We decided that participants should come to the event in teams of union and community representatives. This would allow the local relationships to strengthen outside the pressures of day-to-day business. It would also allow us to learn by looking comprehensively at a small number of districts and hearing from both sides of the partnerships. Finally, it created a core of organizers and leaders from each participating district who had shared the experience of the conference and could build on what they heard and learned as a team.

## Power - A Key Dynamic

Our efforts to uncover and understand emerging partnerships across the country led us to more than 60 unions and community organizations in 25 school districts in 21 states. Everywhere we could, we spoke with both a union and a community organizing contact.

We were looking for more than just talk. A key hypothesis was: local teachers unions -- traditionally powerful players within school districts -- will only dedicate substantial time and energy to building relationships with parent or community

groups they see as having a track record and some degree of power to bring to the table. Parent/teacher associations and other community-based agencies often have the best intentions but no real base from which to wield power. We wanted each side to recognize its self-interest in working together. Otherwise, our experience told us, relationships are destined to be short-lived and one-sided.

By the fall of 2002 we had developed some understanding of the landscape. Certain themes were emerging that helped us refine our ideas about the convening. We also got a better sense about some of the nuances of these relationships and how they develop and function.

We decided to seek as many as 10 teams of four to come together. Each team would include an elected union official, preferably a president or vice-president, and an active member of the teachers union. Partnered with them would be a lead organizer and active leader from a community group.

## Chicago

Months of exploration, conversation and planning culminated in April 2003, when the Partnerships for Change meeting was held in Chicago. Nine teams of four, representing collaborations in eight school districts (New York City sent two teams) came together for the two-day event.

A key to the gathering's success was the participation of high-level leaders from the school districts. Among our participants we welcomed:

- ♦ four union presidents;
- ♦ nine high-level union representatives (vice presidents, district representatives, etc.);
- ♦ three classroom teachers;
- ♦ eight senior community organizers,

representing three of the national organizing networks and one independent organizing collaborative;

- ♦ two school principals; and
- ♦ six community leaders (most of them public school parents).

It was an impressive bunch. Each team developed a "profile" that described their work, their relationships and the challenges they were grappling with in their development of collaborative work.

In addition to our teams, a range of resource people joined the Planning Committee members at the meeting. While the work of the teams, along with relationship-building between and among team representatives, was the primary agenda for the meeting, our guests and resource people played supportive roles by facilitating discussions, sharing their expertise, or withdrawing to allow the teams to talk when necessary. Our guests and non-team participants included:

- ♦ the chief executive officer of the National Education Association;
- ♦ the directors of three NEA internal departments;
- ♦ the executive director of ACORN;
- ♦ the president of the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers;
- ♦ a vice president of the American Federation of Teachers;
- ♦ the director of the Education Policy Research Unit at Arizona State University;
- ♦ representatives from several foundations, including all of those participating in the Planning Committee and others.

The guests helped to facilitate sessions and conversations, led discussions and were available for con-

versations and discussions with the teams throughout the conference.

The two-day meeting was filled with questions. What made these relationships tick? What are the hurdles that others might encounter? What concrete issues lend themselves to collaborative work? Will such collaborations really lead to better results for poor children and children of color? How can these partnerships be supported?

During the meeting, participants identified some common characteristics of their relationships that could be useful to others engaged in this work. Successful partnerships seemed to be:

- ♦ rooted in negotiation and openness, and engaged in deep communication;
- ♦ mutually respectful of each other's work and organizational culture;
- ♦ talking about big issues, each group's assumptions, and long-term goals; and
- ♦ developing a common agenda, rather than pushing pre-existing strategies on the others.

Another lesson was the value of "retreat" time. To a person, participants expressed gratitude for the time to meet informally with their fellow teammates and to build on both personal and professional sides of their relationships. Being aware of these dynamics within the partnerships helped partners become more deliberate in their work, and is certain to help those of us who want to support and nurture similar efforts.

It became evident that several areas of work are well suited to helping parents and teachers find common ground on important issues. These included efforts to understand and influence the implementation of the new No Child Left Behind Act, campaigns to oppose privatization of schools, and work around teacher quality and school climate.

A full report on the meeting and brief descriptions of our partnership teams can be seen in the Center for Community Change's report on the convening, which is included in the Education Organizing newsletter (issue #13). The newsletter is available in hard copy from CCC, or on its website at [www.communitychange.org/education/publications](http://www.communitychange.org/education/publications).

## What's Next ?

The Planning Committee and the Center for Community Change initially envisioned this project as culminating in the Chicago meeting and the development of the written report on that meeting. But the enthusiasm generated in Chicago led the committee, through the summer of 2003, to discuss the possibility of extending the project over an additional 18 months. Efforts are underway now to secure funding for four types of activities to take place over this period:

- ♦ Additional convenings. The Partnerships for Change project will be planning two additional retreat meetings over the next 18 months. These meetings will include the original partnership teams, and will allow them to continue building their relationships and reflecting on their work. In addition, we hope to bring a small number of newer collaborative teams into the fold. Representatives from the teams will play a lead role in helping to determine the most useful agenda and components of these additional retreats;
- ♦ Periodic updates. The project will produce regular updates for partnership teams, so that they can stay in touch with the work developing in other cities, and the relationships as they build.
- ♦ Outreach and Public Message. The project hopes to use newsletters, magazines and other media to begin to change public perceptions about the divergent interests of teachers and parents in school reform. By

lifting up the stories of the partnerships, and telling the stories of the collaborative work among community groups, parents, school reform organizations, teachers and their unions, we hope to encourage more discussion and collaboration between parents and teachers and their organizations across the country;

- ♦ A Resource Clearinghouse. As the collaborations begin to delve into some of the sticky and complex issues of school change, the project will develop a resource clearinghouse to support their work. The clearinghouse might, for example, have sample union contract language about staff development or parent involvement. Organizing groups that develop platforms or working principals will be able to share them through the resource clearinghouse. Our hope is that such a clearinghouse will be able to provide partnerships with the program support they need to build their efforts towards real change.

The Partnerships for Change project has provided a welcome spark in the all-too-often frustrating world of school reform. We are hopeful that some of these partnerships will begin to demonstrate the power of collaborative work -- through improved educational achievement for low-income children and students of color in struggling public schools. ●

*For more information about the Partnerships for Change project, contact the Center for Community Change at 1000 Wisconsin Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20007 or contact Leigh Dingerson at [Ldingerson@communitychange.org](mailto:Ldingerson@communitychange.org). See the Center's website at [www.communitychange.org](http://www.communitychange.org).*

# The Community Giving Resource: New NFG Project Will Help Donors and Their Families Build Strong Neighborhoods and Communities

By Elizabeth Myrick

To play an active role in community giving, family foundations and individual donors must have access to concise, useful and timely knowledge on a range of community development issues. In 2002, NFG convened a series of listening sessions at which donors discussed the challenges of supporting community development and poverty alleviation. In every case, donors reported feeling a desire to contribute to these issues, but also feeling "overwhelmed," "unsure" and "unqualified" to make grants in low-income neighborhoods or toward issues such as housing, economic security and workforce development.

The Community Giving Resource (CGR) is a donor-education project aimed at removing the barriers that keep donors from supporting local community development causes. Led by the Neighborhood Funders Group in partnership with the Aspen Institute Nonprofit Sector and Philanthropy Program, CGR will engage donors in community philanthropy by sharing the ways small family foundations and individual donors can make a difference in building strong communities and neighborhoods.

Because small foundation trustees and individual donors tend to fly beneath the radar of traditional donor-education activities, CGR is taking an incremental approach to engaging donors in community giving. CGR is combining on-line resources with personal one-on-one referral services that will lead,

over time, to local peer-learning and giving circles.

NFG anticipates working closely with its members and with community foundations, regional associations of grantmakers and other groups to create resources and peer-learning opportunities that are relevant, useful and action-oriented. Last December, NFG convened a National Advisory Committee comprised of small family-foundation staff and individual donors to serve as ongoing advisors to this project. The National Advisory Committee provided invaluable feedback regarding the use of language, outreach strategies and the unique needs of family foundations and individual donors. CGR will continue to draw upon this advisory committee and others to ensure that CGR reaches and serves our intended audience of family-foundation trustees and individual donors.

*The Community Giving Resource (CGR) is a donor-education project aimed at removing the barriers that keep donors from supporting local community development causes.*

## A Three-Step Approach

Step one of CGR, a sophisticated, yet user-friendly website, is already in development. We have contracted with Interactive Applications, Inc. (IAPPs) to create and host the site. IAPPs works exclusively with nonprofit and foundation clients and has a substantial background and reputation. Beta testing of the site is scheduled to begin in early February 2004. The CGR website will act as a "virtual mentor," guiding donors through the basics of community development grant-making (learning about a community, making a grant, etc) and offering issue briefs on a series of specific community development topics, beginning with housing, jobs and health and wellness. Case studies in these topical areas are drawn from small foundations and will provide context and inspiration to visitors to the CGR website.

Frequently updated news, learning opportunities and statistics will add to the dynamic feel of the website. Visitors to the site will be invited to receive electronic newsletters alerting them to new content and learning opportunities. The Fannie Mae Foundation is generously allowing the CGR website to import software called Dataplex, which will provide donors with simple access to a database of community information organized around state, county, even ZIP code. From the CGR site, donors can type in their ZIP codes and quickly capture key data about income, education,

poverty, housing and other statistics for their area. Combining this data with more qualitative guidance on community philanthropy, as well as issue briefs and case studies, will result in more informed, confident and effective giving.

CGR's second step will lead donors into a more personal relationship with CGR staff and our networks. Using the website and other outreach activities, CGR will promote one-on-one phone referral services that will assist individual donors in connecting to local organizations and awarding effective grants. With this service in place, NFG's membership and Aspen's networks of experts will be no more than a phone call away from donors. CGR will become a trusted source of referrals as well as a sounding board for donors making grants in the field of community development. Over time, CGR's relationships with individual donors will alert us to groups of donors clustered in the same city or region who are looking for more in-depth, peer-learning opportunities.

Participation in local peer-learning and giving circles will represent CGR's third step. Time and again, donors report their reliance on peers to inform their grantmaking. Over the next two years, peer-learning circles will be piloted in select communities where a "critical mass" of local donors and small foundations are eager to participate. Infused with NFG's networks and knowledge,

local giving circles will also emphasize peer learning by allowing donors to meet and learn from one another the challenges, best practices and rewards of community philanthropy.

The Aspen Institute has direct experience creating well-structured, but informal peer-learning opportunities for grantmakers based upon a model of "action-reflection-refined action." The process of learning from and reporting back to peers raises the stakes for grantmakers. Over the course of several peer-learning events, participants develop relationships with peers along with a fervor about their new knowledge and skills. What results is an abiding sense of responsibility to implement increasingly effective philanthropic strategies.

At a time when government and national philanthropic resources are decreasing, CGR will expand the philanthropic pie to support grassroots community-building organizations, poverty-alleviation strategies and other issues traditionally deemed beyond the scope of small family foundation and individual donor giving. CGR's three-step process of donor engagement will build donors' trust and, over time, will result in more donors actively and effectively supporting strong neighborhoods and communities.

Staffed part-time by NFG's executive and associate

directors, Spence Limbocker and Bettye Brentley, CGR is currently funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and is working with national foundations to secure additional funding. NFG has contracted with Aspen Institute senior associate Elizabeth Myrick to manage the project.

If you plan to attend the Council on Foundations' Family Foundations conference, please join us at the NFG reception at 6 p.m. Sunday, February 8 at the New York Hilton hotel for the unveiling of this new resource. 

*To learn more about The Community Giving Resource and ways you can become involved, contact Elizabeth Myrick at [emyrick@aspeninstitute.org](mailto:emyrick@aspeninstitute.org) or 202-736-2523.*

*At a time when government and national philanthropic resources are decreasing, CGR will expand the philanthropic pie to support grassroots community-building organizations, poverty-alleviation strategies and other issues traditionally deemed beyond the scope of small family foundation and individual donor giving.*

Donna. "We know that if we make a \$25,000 grant to them for a project, they'll do a good job. In this situation, if \$25,000 would greatly improve the chances of NEDLC coming through this transition well and strengthened ... that would be the highest leverage grant I could imagine making to them."

What should funders consider when they see an important grantee facing the departure of a longtime executive director, perhaps a founder? How can funders successfully raise the issue of succession planning with grantees? What are appropriate strategies for small foundations?

## Raising the issue

Many nonprofit executives have departure in the back of their minds, but don't know where to begin. One commented, "I'm afraid to talk to the board about it until I have a plan. And I can't talk to the staff—they'll freak out."

Sylvia Yee, vice president of San Francisco's Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, observed, "I usually will ask long time grantees about their plans for eventual departure. I'm very encouraged when I learn they've been talking to their boards about succession planning, or that they've talked with a consultant."

*Program officers can be valuable allies for departing executives, acquainting them with resources and choices, and offering to work together to see the organization through.*

Nonprofit executives, particularly founders, have a wide variety of reactions to the question. Some are insulted and wonder if the question is an "invitation to leave." Others are grateful to have the chance to air their own concerns and to ask for help in preparing the organization for a good transition. Many are keenly aware of the issue -- but unsure what can be done, or what an appropriate role for them would be. Program officers can be valuable allies for departing executives, acquainting them with resources and choices, and offering to work together to see the organization through.

## Giving advice ... or not?

A common quandary is how a program officer can be helpful to an organization that is hiring a new executive. Board members are frequently unaware that funders can be important resources. Many board members don't have much experience in the nonprofit sector, and are unfamiliar with the organization's funders. "When one of our grantees lost their executive director, I left a phone message with the board president saying I would be happy to help them think through qualities they should seek in a new executive director," said one foundation president who asked not to be identified. "He called me back and said they didn't need any help," he continued. "He wasn't clued in enough to realize that I'm an important investor and while they don't have to follow my advice, they should want to know what I have to say."

On the other hand, some funders can be seen as heavy-handed by grantees: One board member reported, "Our main funder decided we just had to hire this person she knew. I have never felt so pressured

*Perhaps most importantly, funders can help raise awareness that executive transition need not be a "mess to get through as quickly as possible," but an opportunity for an organization to transform itself.*

in my life." If an organization hires someone strongly supported by the foundation and later ends up unhappy with that person, there will be a tendency to blame the foundation and demand continued funding: "You wanted her, now you better fund her."

## Ways to help

There are more ways than ever to help grantees through executive transition. Following early work by Tom Adams of Transition Guides and Tim Wolfred at CompassPoint, local resources are springing up in many communities. Some ways to help grantees include:

- ♦ **Make a grant for executive transition assistance.** Local providers and consultants may offer consulting to boards of directors, executive search, job description and compensation assistance, and post-hire support.
- ♦ **Help fund an interim executive director** to give the organization enough time to think through what it needs, sort out tangled affairs if necessary, and emotionally "let go" of the former leader.
- ♦ **Let an important leader know you would consider funding an executive coach for him or her** -- a professional trained to

help executives succeed at work and, if it seems appropriate, think about eventual departure.

Perhaps most importantly, funders can help raise awareness that executive transition need not be a "mess to get through as quickly as possible," but an opportunity for an organization to transform itself. Some ways to help leaders know more are:

- ♦ **Sponsor a briefing -- perhaps through the Regional Association of Grantmakers -- on succession planning and executive transitions.** Briefings sponsored by Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) for its grantee leaders have been well received and helped break the ice on a topic most grantees have been mulling over in isolation.
- ♦ **Sponsor a special briefing for board members.** Board members often have little experience with nonprofit executive departures, so they may bring both helpful and inappropriate ideas from their business or government backgrounds. In particular, board members are helped by realizing that succession planning

is more than selecting and grooming a successor. It is also a means of making sure the agency's programs and systems are sustainable beyond the tenure of the current staff leader. Many neighborhood execs become "superheroes" over time, building up key funding relationships and managing their wide range of responsibilities in idiosyncratic ways suited to their special wiles and talents.

## Back at NEDLC

Donna Stark is optimistic. NEDLC had also received transition funding from two of its other funders and moved through a 12-month transition process that culminated in the hire of a new executive director well suited to lead NEDLC in the future. Donna had seen NEDLC's board challenged by the prospect of new leadership. She saw the board rise to the challenge by making the transition from support for an established leader to partnership with the new one, Roger Clay. She knew that the board's discussions about politics, race, economics and strategy had been framed as part of the hiring process, and had helped

strengthen the board and the organization. She is satisfied that she played an important role in helping this important organization get through a time of great vulnerability and use it as an opportunity. She is positive about the new executive and the search that had led to his hire. She picked up the phone to give him a call. 📞

*Jan Masaoka is executive director of CompassPoint Nonprofit Services, a leading technical assistance organization, which provides a wide range of executive transition services to nonprofits. Her recent book, Best of the Board Café, includes several articles on executive departure, succession planning and board-CEO relationships. For more on CompassPoint's services and research on executive transitions and succession planning, see [www.compasspoint.org/executivetransitions](http://www.compasspoint.org/executivetransitions).*

## JOIN NFG TODAY!

If you are a grantmaker and not yet a member of NFG, we invite you to join us.

Benefits of membership include:

- ♦ Reduced rate on NFG conference registration
- ♦ Information and tools that help grantmakers accomplish tangible outcomes
- ♦ Networking with the most creative minds in philanthropy
- ♦ Access to model programs and accomplished practitioners through site visits and educational forums, including NFG's annual conference
- ♦ Cutting-edge, in-depth, ongoing program and policy discussions through the Rural Funders Working Group, Working Group on Labor and Community, Workforce Development Working Group, and other activities initiated and led by NFG's membership.

Our members include community, family, private and corporate foundations as well as religious funders. All are committed to providing support to improve the economic and social conditions in urban and rural communities. For more information, visit [www.nfg.org](http://www.nfg.org), call (202) 833-4690, or email [nfg@nfg.org](mailto:nfg@nfg.org).

## Book Review

# *Dynamics of Organizing: Building Power by Developing the Human Spirit*

Shel Trapp

Reviewed by Regina McGraw

I wish that you could see Shel Trapp. The man is a symbol of a prior age -- a cigarette smoking, hard drinking, and raspy-voiced tough guy. Shel is also a man not in tune with his times -- he thinks that Oprah is wrong. Shel believes that it is not individuals who need to change, or have an extreme makeover. He is convinced that low-income and working people should be angry at a system that does not allow for equality, and that permits corporations to let profit trump people. As Shel says, "You can't raise yourself up by your bootstraps if you don't have boots."

This book is a compilation of Shel's stories -- some funny, some poignant -- all making the point that when the system is rotten, you've got to throw some tomatoes at it. Through all of these reflections, Shel is revealed as a man who loves people, who genuinely believes that people deserve an even break, and that if you don't have some fun in life, it isn't worth living.

The background of Shel's stories is the history of community organizing, done in Chicago and throughout the nation. Shel is way too modest to list all of the accomplishments he was a part of, but he does talk some about the successful campaign to win one of the most important pieces of legislation for low-income communities -- CRA, the Community Reinvestment Act. Over the past twenty-five years that legislation has put more than \$1.5 trillion into low-income communities across the country.

What Shel remembers the most are the people he worked with rather than the problems that were solved, or the issues that were won. He recalls with great relish the creative and courageous community leaders who fought with him over the years. It's residents of low-income communities who matter in Shel's book -- and the leaders who are willing to stand up and fight with him.

There are few books written about community organizing, and even fewer that take you inside the day-to-day world of organizing. Shel has spoken for the record on the subject and his insights and reflections bring organizing into focus as a strategy for social change, for involving community members in solving community problems, and for building power at a grassroots level. He is a talented organizer and a talented storyteller, and this makes the tales of his working life both a history and a cautionary tale for the future.

*... when the system is rotten,  
you've got to throw some  
tomatoes at it.*

This is not a book for those who think everything is right with our nation. It is a book that outlines how we can achieve what Texas legislator Barbara Jordan called, "a democracy as good as its promise." This also is not a book for those who think that politeness will change the mind of corporate or government institutions. Shel's stories of success in confronting slumlords,

bank CEOs, aldermen, and others in power illustrate how conflict, tension, and theatrics can make the playing field equal between those who have a problem, and those who can solve it. Some of those in power acquiesced easily -- others' lack of action demanded more compelling tactics. Through it all, Shel stayed focused on the goal, and in doing so trained hundreds of leaders to demand democracy's promise.

This book is a great read, an instructional manual on the art of community organizing, and a unique glimpse into the lives of those who put themselves on the line to improve their communities. And it is the story of one man who imagines the world as it could be and encourages us to play a role in making that imagined place a reality.

If you would like to order a copy of Shel Trapp's new book, please contact Alicia Mendoza by phone at 312-243-3035, or email at [alicia@ntic-us.org](mailto:alicia@ntic-us.org). The cost is \$25, which includes shipping. ☺

# Resources and People

## Resources

The Foundation for the MidSouth is pleased to announce the release of a new video, Workforce Alliance: Building Communities from Within. This video is a tool to promote dialogue in communities about the advantages of having a workforce development initiative. Learn how individuals benefit, how local needs are met, and what communities stand to gain from the development of a local workforce training and placement program. For more information visit [www.fdnmidsouth.org](http://www.fdnmidsouth.org).

The Aspen Institute's Nonprofit Sector and Philanthropy Program e-newsletter, "Philanthropy Information Retrieval Project," is available to NFG members. PIRP highlights emerging issues that may be visible only on the horizon and reports on new ideas and developments that may affect the field of philanthropy in the years to come. If you have an item you believe would be helpful to your colleagues, please e-mail Doug Rule at [drule@burnesscommunications.com](mailto:drule@burnesscommunications.com). If you would like to subscribe to this newsletter please e-mail [philanthropy@aspeninstitute.org](mailto:philanthropy@aspeninstitute.org).

*Workforce Intermediaries for the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Robert P. Giloth, is a compendium of the latest research and thought surrounding workforce intermediaries, a term used to describe the organizations, partnerships and practices that consider both employer needs for trained workers and worker needs for skills and jobs that pay a living wage and offer benefits. This book looks at the politics of local and regional workforce development and the ways politicians and others concerned with the workforce systems have helped or hindered that process. Dr. Giloth is the director of the Family Economic Success area of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. For more information

please contact Gary Kramer at [gkramer@temple.edu](mailto:gkramer@temple.edu).

The Four Freedoms Fund (FFF), created in the spring of 2003, is a project of Public Interest Projects, a new fundraising and grantmaking initiative. FFF is a collaboration involving several national foundations that support strategic collaborations across regions, sectors and issue areas that unite immigrants and citizens to promote and defend civil liberties and human rights in the United States and increase civic integration among newcomers. The ultimate goal of FFF is to create a coherent infrastructure of local, regional and national organizations that will engage ethnic and religious minority communities and immigrants in public policy discussions at local, state and federal levels, defend affected communities, protect hard-won rights, and promote alternative domestic security policies that are targeted, effective and fair. An additional goal of the fund is to encourage all policymakers to consider policies that work to encourage immigrants to become more engaged in the U.S. political and civic processes. FFF has commitments to date of \$2.5 million and made its first round of grants in the fall of 2003; another round is scheduled for summer 2004. FFF's long-term goal is to double the monies contributed by the initial donor group. For more information, please contact Michele Lord ([mlord@lordross.com](mailto:mlord@lordross.com)) or Shona Chakravarty ([shona@lordross.com](mailto:shona@lordross.com)) at Public Interest Projects.

*New Neighbors, New Opportunities: Immigrants and Refugees in Grand Rapids* is a report recently published by the Dyer-Ives Foundation that focuses attention on local dynamics related to our growing immigrant and refugee community. The report presents findings based on research into both the local situation and innovative work

in other communities around the country. It aims to present a new perspective about the critical role newcomers can play in community building. The report is available online at [www.dyer-ives.org](http://www.dyer-ives.org) under New Publications.

*Renewing Congregations: The Contribution of Faith-Based Community Organizing* is a resource publication based on the Congregational Development Research Study conducted by Interfaith Funders and the University of New Mexico. To order Interfaith Funders publications, please e-mail Mary Ann Flaherty at [maflahertyif@yahoo.com](mailto:maflahertyif@yahoo.com).

## People

**New Executive Director.** The board of directors of the National Network of Grantmakers is pleased to announce **Ron McKinley** as NNG's new executive director, effective January 5, 2004. Prior to joining NNG, Ron was the director of the Wilder Center for Communities at the Amherst Wilder Foundation in St. Paul, Minn. NNG will be relocating its headquarters to Minneapolis.

**Fred Rogers Leadership Award.** Grantmakers for Children, Youth and Families is pleased to announce that **Luba Lynch**, executive director of the A.L. Mailman Family Foundation, is the 2003 recipient of the first annual Fred Rogers Leadership Award. The award was created to recognize outstanding contributions by staff or trustees in the field of philanthropy on behalf of children, youth and families. ☺

Save the Date!

# Democracy and Empowerment: Funding for Civic Engagement and Justice

NFG Annual Conference  
September 13-15, 2004  
Omni Park Plaza  
Boston, Massachusetts

Stay tuned to [www.nfg.org](http://www.nfg.org) for details.

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Please call NFG Executive Director Spence Limbocker and Newsletter Editor Bettye Brentley at 202.833.4690, or email [nfg@nfg.org](mailto:nfg@nfg.org). *NFG Reports* Editorial Committee: Willie Cole, Bob Jaquay, Regina McGraw.



One Dupont Circle NW, Suite 700  
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