

STRENGTHENING A COMMUNITY'S NONPROFIT SECTOR



introduction

The Jessie Ball duPont Community Building Fund was created in 1999 – before the new millennium worldwide celebration, the 2000 presidential election and the September 11 attacks on America, before we deployed our military to fight in Iraq and Afghanistan. A simpler time.

In the fall of 1999, our national anxiety was focused on whether computers would continue working past midnight on December 31. Stock markets were soaring, real estate values were rising, and the Jessie Ball duPont Fund was wrestling with the implications of the Fund's sudden prosperity.

Between the end of 1996 and late 1999, the Fund's assets had increased more than 45 percent, causing a similarly exponential increase in our grants. Given the limitations on our grantmaking¹, the trustees faced the challenge of being responsible stewards of this largesse.

At the same time, the trustees recognized the Fund's responsibility to assume a strategic role in societal problem solving, especially in its home community, given the national trend to shift the financing of social services away from the federal government to states and localities.

Early in 1999, the trustees had agreed to explore the idea of a large, Jacksonville-based initiative, stipulating

that, whatever its final shape, it must be "deeply systemic."

By fall, the trustees had developed a broad outline of the Jessie Ball duPont Community Building Fund – an initiative to benefit organizations serving children and youth in Jacksonville. The Community Building Fund would be a "capacity-building grantmaking initiative" that would:

- Include capacity-building grants within its grantmaking initiative;
- Create a forum of nonprofit organizations, churches and individuals;
- Provide a set of educational and training activities drawing on experienced and professional instructors;
- Support working partnerships and research-based community programs to improve the quality of life for children.

We believed then, and we believe now, that the nonprofit sector is an essential element to living in a healthy community. And we believe that child-serving organizations are essential to helping children develop into productive adult citizens.

In retrospect, it is tempting to draw an orderly picture of the evolution of the Community Building Fund. But it was not so. In partnership with our colleagues at The Community Foundation in Jacksonville, we struggled and stum-

bled. And yet, in our confusion, our frustration and, yes, sometimes, our arguments, we learned. We learned as much about what we were not, as about what we were and wanted to be. And we learned that change does not happen in isolation.

As the Community Building Fund evolved, Jacksonville evolved. Major institutional players experienced changes in leadership, significantly altering the funding landscape for child-serving nonprofits. New statewide coalitions that only touched the fringes of Jacksonville's child-serving sector influenced inter-organizational relationships locally.

And while Jacksonville evolved, the world changed. Today, we are fighting multiple wars in foreign lands. We are awash in mortgage foreclosures. Increasing numbers of children are without health insurance. And, in Jacksonville, at least, we are wrestling with state-mandated reductions in revenue that threaten to undermine services to all children in our community. We could not have foreseen these events in 1999, any more than we can today foresee events eight years from now.

Among the lessons of the Community Building Fund, therefore, is this: We cannot wait to have everything figured out, all the pieces in place, all the players lined up. We exist on a rolling sea, sometimes turbulent, sometimes glassy, but never still. We must navigate with intelligence and care, but navigate we must.

In September 2007, Ralph Smith, executive vice president of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, visited Jacksonville to help us celebrate the achievements of the Community Building Fund. He noted that the nonprofit sector today – in Jacksonville and elsewhere – is facing many challenges.

He pointed to a blurring of the line between for-profits and nonprofits; the drive toward efficiency that has invaded nonprofits; and the frequently mentioned leadership challenge. "Through the Community Building Fund work," he said, "you have managed to create a platform and build a stage for conversations addressing these challenges to take place."



Sherry P. Magill
President

¹ Mrs. duPont's will restricts the trustees to making grants only to those organizations identified in the will. In 1999, there were slightly more than 330 such organizations, many of which were small congregations and nonprofits.

"Dynamic entities resist change. This resistance is inherent in nearly every organized form ever examined, from ecosystems to institutions to individuals.

Therefore, it should not be surprising that any social change effort worth doing takes longer, costs more or is more frustrating than anticipated."

**Community Building Fund
Documentation Report,
December 2003**



The Jessie Ball duPont Community Building Fund

On a warm, early summer morning in June 2007, representatives of more than 100 nonprofit organizations packed an auditorium in downtown Jacksonville to deliver a strong and cohesive message to state and local elected officials: *do not undermine local government's ability to fund the nonprofits that serve our community.*

At issue was an unprecedented move by the Florida Legislature to limit the ability of local governments to raise local tax revenue. At stake was the funding that local government in Jacksonville provides to scores of nonprofits – from arts organizations to environmental organizations to organizations serving children, seniors and the sick.

The gathering was a landmark event for Jacksonville-area nonprofits. Not only were large numbers of nonprofits present, but they were speaking for one another, with a common message. And elected officials were there to listen.

In short, Jacksonville's nonprofit sector was behaving like a sector. And the public – and public policymakers – were paying attention.

Eight years earlier, in 1999, the Jessie Ball duPont Fund trustees and staff had created the Jessie Ball duPont

Community Building Fund, an ambitious undertaking designed to strengthen the nonprofit organizations serving the area's children and youth.

To say that the Community Building Fund alone led to the emergence of a stronger nonprofit sector in Jacksonville would, of course, be a great overstatement. But it is not an overstatement to say that the Community Building Fund's work created an environment and provided essential tools that helped the sector to coalesce, to grow smarter, and to be stronger.

It was, after all, within the context of the Community Building Fund that the first research was conducted on Jacksonville's nonprofit sector, that multiple organizations were addressed and trained as a cohort, and that nonprofits were challenged to chart their own futures for the benefit of their clients and the community, rather than at the whims of their funders.

"We knew from the outset that Jacksonville needed a stronger, healthier, more vibrant nonprofit sector," said Sherry Magill, president of the Jessie Ball duPont Fund. "The Community Building Fund was a framework in which to start that work."

THE PROBLEM AND THE SOLUTION

In early 1999, the trustees of the Jessie Ball duPont Fund faced an unusual challenge: the Fund's assets had increased 29% between the end of 1996¹ and the start of 1999 (they would increase another 16% during 1999). Because the Fund, like all private foundations, is required by law to distribute at least 5% of its assets each year, this dramatic asset growth drove an equally dramatic increase in the grantmaking budget.

While the Fund's grantmaking budget was growing, its pool of potential grantees was not. Under the terms of Jessie Ball duPont's will, the Fund may make grants only to those organizations specifically identified by Mrs. duPont. Thus the pool of potential grantees was finite – about 330 organizations, many of which were small, with limited capacity, or in remote locations, spread across more than 30 states.

This grantmaking challenge arose against the backdrop of some emerging but significant changes in the political and cultural landscape. The federal government was continuing its practice of shifting the financing of social services to states and municipalities. And Florida had elected as governor in 1998 Jeb Bush, who in his first year made clear his plans to cut government spending in ways that would reduce services to vulnerable children and adults. Not surprisingly, the conversation nationally and locally focused responsibility for

solving social problems less on government and more on the private and non-profit sectors.

The trustees began to weigh the Fund's responsibility to assume a strategic role in social problem solving, especially in its home community of Jacksonville. They focused on the need to build capacity among the organizations that would be expected to do that work.

The Fund's trustees and staff had considerable knowledge of the local non-profit sector. Of the Fund's eligible organizations, about 50 are located in Jacksonville and more than a dozen of those are nonprofits that provide services to children and youth. That prompted the trustees to target organizations providing services to children and youth.

In addition to Fund-eligible nonprofits, the trustees and staff believed that non-eligible nonprofits in Jacksonville needed to be involved in any community-wide initiative designed to strengthen programs serving children and youth. Reaching them would be a challenge because of the Fund's grantmaking restrictions.

To further complicate matters, local nonprofit organizations that served children were broadly influenced by the Jacksonville Children's Commission, which regrants local, state and federal taxpayer dollars to children's services. Heavily bureaucratic and compliance-oriented at the time, the Children's

Commission wielded great influence – and some would say intimidated – local nonprofits.

In fall 1999, Magill, the Fund's president, proposed that the trustees create the Jessie Ball duPont Community Building Fund, a "capacity-building grantmaking initiative" that would:

- Include capacity-building grants within its grantmaking initiative;
- Create a forum of nonprofit organizations, churches and individuals;
- Provide a set of educational and training activities drawing on experienced and professional instructors;
- Support working partnerships and research-based community programs to improve the quality of life for children.

The trustees approved the concept and, on November 2, 1999, the Fund publicly announced creation of the Jessie Ball duPont Community Building Fund, to be housed at The Community Foundation in Jacksonville, an eligible organization under the terms of Mrs. duPont's will. The Community Building Fund would be capitalized with a contribution of \$5 million over five years, making it the largest single investment made by the trustees to date.

According to Magill's letter to The Community Foundation, the Community Building Fund was intended to "mitigate against those factors that put the children of North Florida at risk and to

enhance those factors that serve to protect children by: a) increasing the institutional capacity of nonprofit organizations and b) building a collaborative of nonprofit organizations and individu-

THE JESSIE BALL DUPONT COMMUNITY BUILDING FUND

Established: November 1999

Structure: A non-endowed advised fund housed at The Community Foundation in Jacksonville

Investment: \$5 million over five years

Advisory Board:

Jessie Ball duPont Fund chair

Jessie Ball duPont Fund vice-chair

Jessie Ball duPont Fund president

The Community Foundation president

One Community Foundation trustee

One chief executive from a North Florida nonprofit

One community representative

als working toward addressing systemic issues related to the well-being of the people of North Florida."

A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

The decision to structure the Community Building Fund as a non-endowed advised fund at The Community Foundation was critical, for reasons that were obvious and some that were not so obvious.

Investing through The Community Foundation allowed the Jessie Ball duPont Fund trustees to reach beyond the limitations of the Fund's eligibility restrictions. As one of the Fund's eligible organizations, The Community

Foundation could receive grants from the Jessie Ball duPont Fund. But as an advised fund of The Community Foundation, the Community Building Fund was not restricted by the terms of Mrs. duPont's will. The Community Building Fund could be a *community* funder.

Partnering with The Community Foundation also created the opportunity for the Jessie Ball duPont Fund to form a different type of relationship with The Community Foundation.

"The Jessie Ball duPont Fund trustees took a big risk in partnering with The Community Foundation," acknowledged Nina Waters, current president of the Foundation.² "The Community Foundation had not done capacity building grantmaking and had not done a long-term initiative. And the grantmaking staff had never had \$1 million in discretionary grant funds in a year, so they did not have the depth of grantmaking experience that the Fund's staff had. Also, at that time, the Foundation's view of grantmaking was very different from that of the Jessie Ball duPont Fund, in terms of listening to grantees, being flexible in the grantmaking process, maintaining an ongoing dialogue with the grantee and learning from the grantmaking."

Magill agreed. "The Community Foundation liked to keep grantees at a distance. That was directly opposite to the thinking of the Fund's trustees and staff. We had hired staff who had

worked on the other side of the desk, as staff in grant-seeking organizations. We were much more attuned to building trusting relationships with grantees."

"It really did stretch us," said Waters. "In many respects, we had to change our way of being, and become part of the sector, too."

A CHALLENGING START

Though the Fund's trustees were clear about what they hoped to accomplish through the Community Building Fund – a stronger cohort of nonprofit organizations serving children and youth – there were challenges with implementation, not the least of which were caused by an immature funding partnership and a difficult political environment. Adding to the challenge was the eagerness of local nonprofits to access this new funding stream.

The Building Fund's advisors – seven individuals representing the Jessie Ball duPont Fund, The Community Foundation and two community representatives – took things slowly, and asked many questions. Who is our target audience? How many organizations exist? What do they do? How are they currently funded? How are they currently functioning?

To answer these questions, the advisors commissioned three research reports.

The Brower Report: To understand more about the child- and youth-serv-

ing nonprofit universe in Jacksonville, the advisors engaged the Florida Public Affairs Center in the College of Social Sciences at Florida State University to conduct research on Jacksonville's youth-serving sector. In May 2000, Ralph S. Brower, associate professor of public administration, presented the report on Child-Serving Agencies in Duval County, which showed:

There were 193 nonprofit organizations that provided child-serving or general purpose social services in Duval County.³ Of those organizations, 37 had a primary mission of serving children and youth, and were not child-care providers, pre-schools or athletic organizations.

Public (government) funds accounted for the largest proportion of revenue for these 37 organizations – 37%, compared with 30% from contributions and 26% from fees-for-service.

The MDC Report: Early in 2000, the advisors had engaged David Dodson and Joan Lipsitz of MDC, a North Carolina-based, nonprofit firm with extensive experience helping organizations build community and capacity, to document the work of the Community Building Fund. In spring 2000, MDC began that assignment by conducting a series of interviews with public agencies and community organizations to learn how community leaders perceived the Community Building Fund.



Sherry P. Magill, president of the Jessie Ball duPont Fund, with Nina Waters, president of The Community Foundation in Jacksonville, in background

MDC reported back to the advisors in June, noting that suggestions for how the Community Building Fund could best help varied widely, from programmatic and demographic direction to public awareness campaigns, research and evaluation. MDC also addressed areas that held potential threats to the success of the Building Fund:

- The need to correct perceptions that the grantmaking process was exclusive;
- The need to complement resources and networks already in place;
- The need to frame the Community Building Fund's goals in terms of broader community change, rather than having organizations compete against one another for scarce resources;
- The need to be clearer about the Community Building Fund's assumptions about the kind of grantmaking that will advance its objectives;

The need to make grants in keeping with the capacity of grantees to manage them;

The need for a clear plan for sustainability once the five-year Community Building Fund ends;

The need to consider leveraging additional resources by collaborating with public agencies.

In July 2000, the advisors agreed to change MDC's role from that of "documenter" to "technical consultant," to support the initiative by facilitating data gathering, decision-making, grantmaking and grantee learning.

The Jordan-Krueger Report: In addition to questions about nonprofits, the advisors had questions about the funders who supported local child- and youth-serving organizations. In summer 2000, the advisors commissioned a highly confidential series of interviews of nonprofit executives, conducted by two local consultants, Jane Jordan of Funding Resources and Celeste Krueger of Celeste Krueger and Associates. Their report, presented to the advisors in September, identified four key challenges facing nonprofit executives:

Funding and fundraising resources: Problems included limited access to funding, dictatorial funders, limited interest by funders in supporting core programs;

Leadership and Boards of Directors: Problems included a poor understanding of roles and responsibilities, poor understanding of

organizational mission and purpose, and low fundraising capacity;

Outcome Measures and Accountability: Problems included a poor understanding of how to evaluate, inconsistent outcome measurement requirements among funders, and a lack of evaluation funding support;

Staff Development and Training: Problems included an inability to provide professional development, continuing education, and leadership and technical skills training.

Throughout this discovery process, pressure was building for the Community Building Fund to make some grants. The Fund had been announced with considerable fanfare in November 1999 and, in retrospect, it is clear that community organizations perceived it as simply another resource for badly needed grant funds. By late summer 2000, nonprofit organizations were growing impatient to learn the details of the program and access those funds.

Some members of the Advisory Committee pushed for more programmatic grants rather than capacity building grants, a reflection not only of the pressure from nonprofit organizations but of the gap in common purpose that existed between Community Foundation leaders and Jessie Ball duPont Fund leaders.

In August 2000, the Community

Building Fund issued a Request for Proposals that stated:

[The Community Building Fund] hopes to nurture family stability, academic success, commitment to education and learning, wellness and health, and economic self-sufficiency by supporting programs and services that:

Discover, celebrate and use the strengths and assets of the people served;

Acknowledge and integrate the various aspects of child development (physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual);

Address the concerns of the child in the context of his or her family or current living situation;

Seek out and address the origin of factors that put children at risk;

Effect change in systems and various approaches to issues; and

Encourage meaningful and helpful partnerships among individuals and/or organizations.

Seventy-three organizations submitted funding proposals in November 2000. The review of those proposals became a watershed moment for the Community Building Fund advisors.

First, the advisors discovered that the two organizations – the Jessie Ball duPont Fund and The Community Foundation – used radically different approaches to grant proposal review, both procedurally and intellectually.

Second, and perhaps more important, the advisors discovered some funda-

mental disconnects between what the Community Building Fund had been created to fund and what the nonprofits were asking to be funded.

"The grant proposals generally were for programs and operations," said Magill. "We saw the Community Building Fund as a resource that would help nonprofit organizations take time to become better organizations. It was clear from the proposals that was not on their radar screen. They were focused strictly on doing. We wanted them to stop and think."

Despite their disappointments, the advisors saw value in making some of the grants. Doing so would provide a first step toward building relationships with these organizations and would alleviate skepticism in the community about whether the Building Fund was going to "do" anything. In March 2001, the Community Building Fund awarded \$959,292 to 29 child- and youth-serving organizations.

"These were not ideal grants, in a pure sense," said Magill, "but they were important first steps. We have learned that you have to meet people – and organizations – where they are. And this was where our youth-serving organizations were at that time."

DEVELOPING A FRAMEWORK

The "crisis" around the first round of grants, was, in some respects, a positive development.

"After the first round of grants, the Advisory Committee was more receptive to focusing on capacity building work," Magill said. "The quality of the grant proposals we received proved the Jessie Ball duPont Fund's original premise, that there was great need for organizational capacity building in the sector. In fact, the crisis over the requests proved a positive in that it brought together those who had been on different sides of the issue."

Throughout much of 2001, the advisors worked with MDC to refine and reorient the initiative. By summer, they had articulated three goals for the Community Building Fund:

- Develop stronger child- and youth-serving organizations with "smarter" programs;
- Build relationships of learning and mutual support among child- and youth-serving organizations, the philanthropic community, and public and private service providers; and
- Nurture a culture of *reflective practice*.

Reflective practice quickly became the "language anchor" that steadied the initiative for the next several years.

Reflective practice is the process of linking critical reflection on change to organizational practice. At its core, it includes the elements of good strategic organizational work. But it is presented as a cycle of reflecting and learning, acting, and then repeating the process.

The "reflective practice process," as adopted by the Community Building Fund, forced organizations to stop "doing" and start thinking about their customers, their environment and their organizations.

Reflective practice had been introduced to the advisors by David Dodson of MDC. LaWanda Ravoira, statewide president of the PACE Center for Girls and a member of the Community Building Fund Advisory Committee, used the approach with her organization with good results, becoming a passionate proponent and advocate.

Because reflective practice is a *process*, it provides structure that can be employed across multiple organizations, as well as the flexibility to adapt to different topics, audiences and environments. It provided a common framework without one-size-fits-all constrictions.

The name – reflective practice – presented some challenges: it was hard to define and initially hard to understand.

"The language was more than difficult in the beginning," Magill said, "but because it was new and didn't belong to anyone – not to The Community Foundation and not to the Jessie Ball duPont Fund – it turned out to be extraordinarily useful."

By early 2003, documentation reports noted, "As the primary process and language of the initiative, Reflective Practice has begun to have some initial

impact on 'business as usual' in the Jacksonville non-profit community....[the process] provides an important common language for understanding the challenges inherent in the relationships among nonprofits, donors and government institutions."⁴

But reflective practice, alone, could not move the sector where the advisors wanted it to go.

Multiple organizations needed training in and experience with the reflective practice process.

Organizations needed to be brought together to begin to build community and collaborations.

Resources needed to exist to support the organizations after the initial learning experience.

To meet these needs, the Building Fund advisors established three strands of work:

Grantmaking to support organizations as they undertook reflective practice activities. (Initially, the Building Fund supported technical assistance workshops to introduce organizations and the community to the concept of reflective practice and guide grant proposal development.)

Convening groups of nonprofit organizations to support one another in their reflective practice work, build their knowledge base on effective practice, and encourage the development of a critical network of child- and youth-serving agencies;

Coaching individual organizations to help them meet their specific challenges.

This last strategy – coaching – was unique in that it required development of a set of local community leaders who could serve as organizational coaches. Building that coaches program became a parallel track of work that the Community Building Fund would undertake. (See The Community Coaches Program, Page 20)

In January 2002, grantees that had received funding through the initial round of grants were introduced to the concept of reflective practice. With the offer of generous technical support, they were invited to apply for grants to support reflective practice work within their organizations.

Of the original 29 organizations that were funded in 2001, 11 applied for reflective practice grants. Ten were awarded reflective practice grants in October 2002, along with seven organizations that had not participated in the initial round of grants.

In addition to receiving the grant funds, which totaled \$632,007, the 17 reflective practice grantees were required to participate in four seminars between November 2002 and spring 2003. Topics include a review of reflective practice and community building strategies.

The seminars were designed not only to share information and build knowledge, but to build community among the grantees, and create a forum where they could discuss youth-related issues and their work. Grantees were asked to bring a board member and a staff member to broaden the community-building and deepen organizational learning.

A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

As the work of the Community Building Fund unfolded, the community changed political leadership, new foundations formed and the nonprofit sector built an infrastructure.

In spring 2003, Jacksonville elected a new mayor, John Peyton, who quickly made early childhood learning a trademark issue of his administration.

Coincidental to Peyton's election was a change in leadership at the Jacksonville Children's Commission. In 2003, the Children's Commission board appointed Linda Lanier to head the agency. Lanier's background was in nonprofit management, not government; she had served as executive director of the local chapter of Planned Parenthood and of the community's major homeless shelter. She was well-connected to both the nonprofit community and the funder community and brought a less bureaucratic, more service-oriented culture to the Children's Commission.

"We can't take credit for the changes at the Children's Commission," Magill said, "but we certainly took advantage of it. As soon as Linda was on the job we called her and said, 'Would you like to apply for a reflective practice grant?' As soon as she completed her orientation, she took us up on the offer."

Lanier's presence at the Children's Commission enabled relationships of trust to develop between the Commission and nonprofits, which furthered the Building Fund's goal of building community within the sector. She also positioned the Commission to work more collaboratively with the funding community.

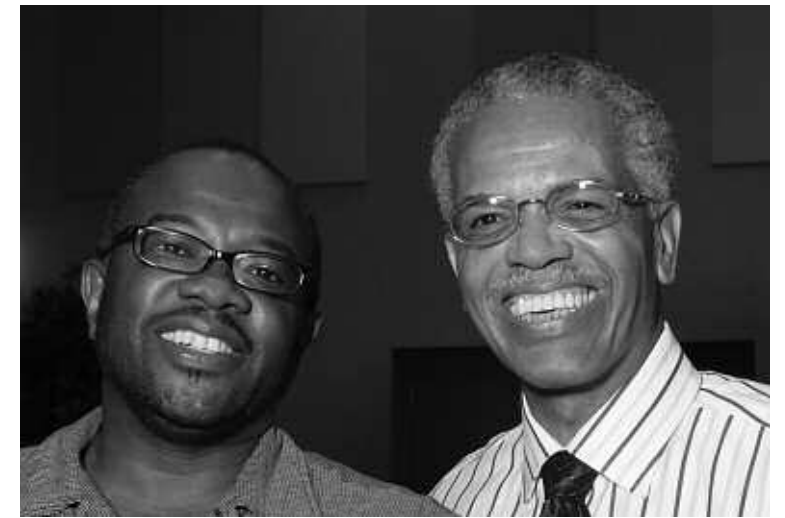
As these changes were unfolding, a major new funder emerged. The Lucy Gooding Charitable Foundation Trust, originally established in 1988, saw its assets soar to \$85 million with the death of its benefactor in 2002. Supporting children's issues was one of its primary focus areas. Not only did the Gooding Foundation bring new resources to the table, it brought new leaders who were willing and eager to become part of the community conversation around the needs of children.

Change also was under way at The Community Foundation. In 2001, Waters moved from the local chapter of PACE to The Community Foundation staff, working with long-time president Andy Bell. In 2004, Bell announced his retirement and the Foundation trustees appointed Waters as the new president.

Like Lanier at the Children's Commission, Waters brought with her a strong understanding of nonprofits in addition to a depth of knowledge about good practices in positive youth development. And, she had broad connections to the funder community. Perhaps most importantly for the Building Fund advisors, her management style was collaborative, making the partnership between the Foundation and the Jessie Ball duPont Fund operate smoothly.

But perhaps the most critical community change was the creation of the Nonprofit Center of Northeast Florida.

Magill had chaired a community study group on the nonprofit sector in the late 1990s and had worked with other community leaders since then to build support for the idea of a nonprofit center in Jacksonville. By 2002, they had raised three-years' worth of operating dollars to launch the center, with the Jessie Ball duPont Fund making a major contribution. The Nonprofit Center of Northeast Florida formally opened in October 2002 under the leadership of Jonathan Lever, who, earlier in his career, had worked as a program officer at the Jessie Ball duPont Fund before earning advanced degrees in law and philanthropic studies.



Chester Daniel, Jacksonville Urban League, and Greg Owens, City Kids Art Factory, (L-R) participated in one of the forums sponsored by the Community Building Fund.

Lever's influence was significant. While many nonprofit support organizations around the country focus on training, Lever's vision for the Nonprofit Center of Northeast Florida was different. He saw the Center as a "Chamber of Commerce" for nonprofit organizations; an entity that could help a disparate group find commonalities, develop a political voice and gain the skills and tools needed to become a true "sector" in the economic, cultural and political landscape of Jacksonville.

His vision for the Center, and by extension, Jacksonville's nonprofit sector, aligned neatly with the Community Building Fund's vision for the child- and youth-serving portion of the sector. That enabled the Nonprofit Center to become an important cog in the machinery of the new sector that was being built.

In addition to these institutional changes, new research projects were launched that would provide a deeper understanding of the sector.

In 2003, the Florida Philanthropic Network produced *Philanthropy in the Sunshine State*, a study that provided the first state-wide look at philanthropic giving. The following year, the Nonprofit Center produced *Philanthropy on the First Coast*, a companion study that focused on the five-county Jacksonville metropolitan area. In early 2005, the Nonprofit Center also produced *The State of the Sector*, the first comprehensive look at Duval County's nonprofit sector, with a five-year review of the sector's financial health.

These reports, along with other information, were presented at the first Nonprofit Summit, convened in February 2005. Attended by public officials, funders, community leaders and others, the Summit helped shift the conversation about nonprofits, moving it away from anecdotal, emotionally-based discussions to those that were data-driven and focused on economic and quality of life issues that resonated across multiple constituencies.

MOVING THE NEEDLE

Against this rich backdrop of community change, the Community Building Fund continued to award grants to organizations to undertake reflective practice work. Between 2002 and 2006, a total of four rounds of reflective prac-

tice grants, totaling \$2,620,933, were awarded to 65 organizations. Another 23 "continuation" grants were awarded to organizations to continue some aspect of reflective practice work that emerged from their initial grants.

Each cohort of reflective practice grantees participated in four learning sessions after they were awarded the grants. These learning sessions were designed to provide tools and techniques that the organizations could use in their reflective practice work and provide the networking and information sharing opportunities that would lead to a stronger, learning-focused community.

In 2003, 2004 and 2006, the Community Building Fund hosted community-wide summits on youth development and community building, with speakers such as Pat Turner, then director of the Children's Museum of Atlanta, and Suzanne Morse, president of the Pew Partnership for Civic Change. These summits brought new perspectives to the grantees and broadened their learning experiences.

In addition, the Community Building Fund made two grants to support the Nonprofit Center of Northeast Florida.

For the advisors, questions remained: "It is working?" "Is change occurring?" "Is the sector stronger?" "Are nonprofits?" "How do we know?"

The "change" questions took many forms. What was the "change model"?

Was the Community Building Fund seeking to affect change strictly at the organizational level, or at the community level? If change was sought at the community level, what was that change and how was the Community Building Fund working to affect it?

"Exploring all of these questions was helpful," said Magill, "because it pushed the advisors to be clearer about who we were and who we were not. We were not service providers. We were not directly impacting the lives of children. We were funders, and our target was the nonprofit organization. From the beginning, that was who we hoped to influence, to change. We thought then, and we continue to think today, that if you strengthen enough organizations in a single community, the community as a whole is stronger."

In December 2005, as the original five-year investment was nearing its end, the team of researchers who had documented the work of the Community Building Fund reported:

"The work has strengthened relationships within the nonprofit sector and between donors and underlined connections between local philanthropy, elected officials and government...The organizational level effects of these capacity building efforts are beginning to be articulated within individual youth serving organizations. The effects of stronger relationships within the sector have had some specific positive outcomes in supporting the sector within

*the state political arena. The ultimate impact of the effort, on the sector and in the strengthening of the organizations and programs that serve Jacksonville's youth, and on the youth themselves, is now possible and can be anticipated if the capacity resources are sustained and organizations are supported in growing from the lessons they have learned."*⁵

Today, Waters and Magill are more specific, and they can tick off a host of changes that have occurred among organizations and the sector that they attribute to the impact of the Community Building Fund.

"We have made major strides toward building a coalition of organizations willing to learn from one another," said Magill. "I don't mean collaborate on programs, or partner together, but learn from each other. That has allowed them to work around sectoral issues and the conversation among the leadership has changed, and they are a stronger sector."

"Agencies and funders now use data more to inform the work, rather than anecdotes or assumptions," said Waters. "We learned the word 'alignment' and we came to understand that strategies must be aligned and we need multiple strategies to address a single issue. Our funders deploy resources differently – investing deep versus wide, long versus short. We understand the importance of communication with both agencies and funders. We look both

outside and inside Jacksonville for knowledge. And we understand the importance of sustainability – we look long term.”

Additionally, both The Community Foundation and the Jessie Ball duPont Fund acknowledge that they experienced their own forms of reflective practice as a result of the Community Building Fund.

“In the first documentation report,” Waters said, “The Community Foundation was described as being ‘inconsistent in grantmaking priorities’ and ‘known for funding programs intended to enhance the quality of life for primarily middle and upper income citizens (the arts) over targeting the least advantaged (social service).’ I took that to our board chair and said, ‘Is this how we want to be perceived?’ As a result, the Foundation embarked on a multi-year process of community listening and learning that resulted in fundamental changes in our grantmaking strategies and priorities.”

Additionally, the Foundation’s internal approach to grantmaking has changed as a result of the experience.

“We now look at grantees as partners,” Waters said. “We ask what didn’t work and we get more out of that than out of what did work. We are more flexible during the grant process. We understand change happens as people apply learning to doing. Our communication with grantees has changed: we provide

lots more technical assistance up front, we do interim site visits in person, and we ask different questions in the closing reports. We value honesty back. We didn’t even get feedback before. Now, we look for feedback and change our work as a result.”

For the Jessie Ball duPont Fund, the Community Building Fund experience inspired a more learning-focused culture among the trustees. “It helped us become a learning organization,” Magill said. “From a practical perspective, we went from six one-day trustee meetings a year to four two-day meetings, with the second day set aside as a learning day. The trustees now talk about it as their reflective practice. It has allowed us to live into being a learning organization.”

MOVING FORWARD

In 2006, the trustees of the Jessie Ball duPont Fund awarded a grant of \$795,000 to The Community Foundation to continue the Community Building Fund as an advised fund that would award grants for reflective practice to nonprofits in Duval County. In making the grant, the trustees removed Mrs. duPont’s name from the fund, an act that symbolized the transition of the Community Building Fund from one grantmaker’s initiative to a true community resource. Today, funders from across the region support the Community Building Fund. Likewise, the Coaches Program has been institutionalized at the Nonprofit Center of Northeast Florida. And The

Community Foundation, the Donors Forum of Northeast Florida and the Jacksonville Children’s Commission have taken the lead on hosting annual summits focused on the state of children and youth in Jacksonville.

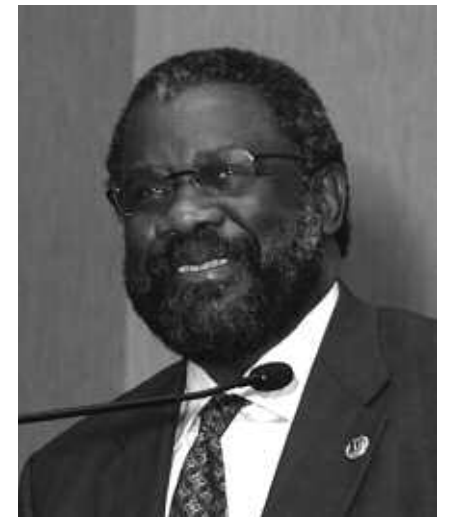
Importantly, neither the Coaches Program nor the reflective practice agenda was articulated in the original vision for the Jessie Ball duPont Community Building Fund. Each was discovered along the way, as the advisors experienced their own form of reflective practice.

“One of the most challenging aspects of reflective practice is the way it changes your direction,” said Waters. “You begin the process thinking you are doing one thing only to wind up doing something different, and fundamentally more significant. You learn to trust the process.”

“We took a leap,” said Magill. “We trusted the process and our partners. From time to time I had profound doubts about having led the Jessie Ball duPont Fund into this sizable financial investment. But I would revisit our original

assumptions and listen to successful organizations that received support from the Community Building Fund and my hopes were restored.

“We have learned and grown tremendously. Our nonprofits are different. Our sector is different. Our challenge now is to hold fast to these lessons in hard economic times, and to broaden our numbers and engage even more organizations in this work. They need it. And Jacksonville needs them.”



Ralph Smith, executive vice president of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, visited Jacksonville in 2007 to celebrate the accomplishments of the Community Building Fund.

¹ Prior to 2002, the Fund’s fiscal year ended October 31.

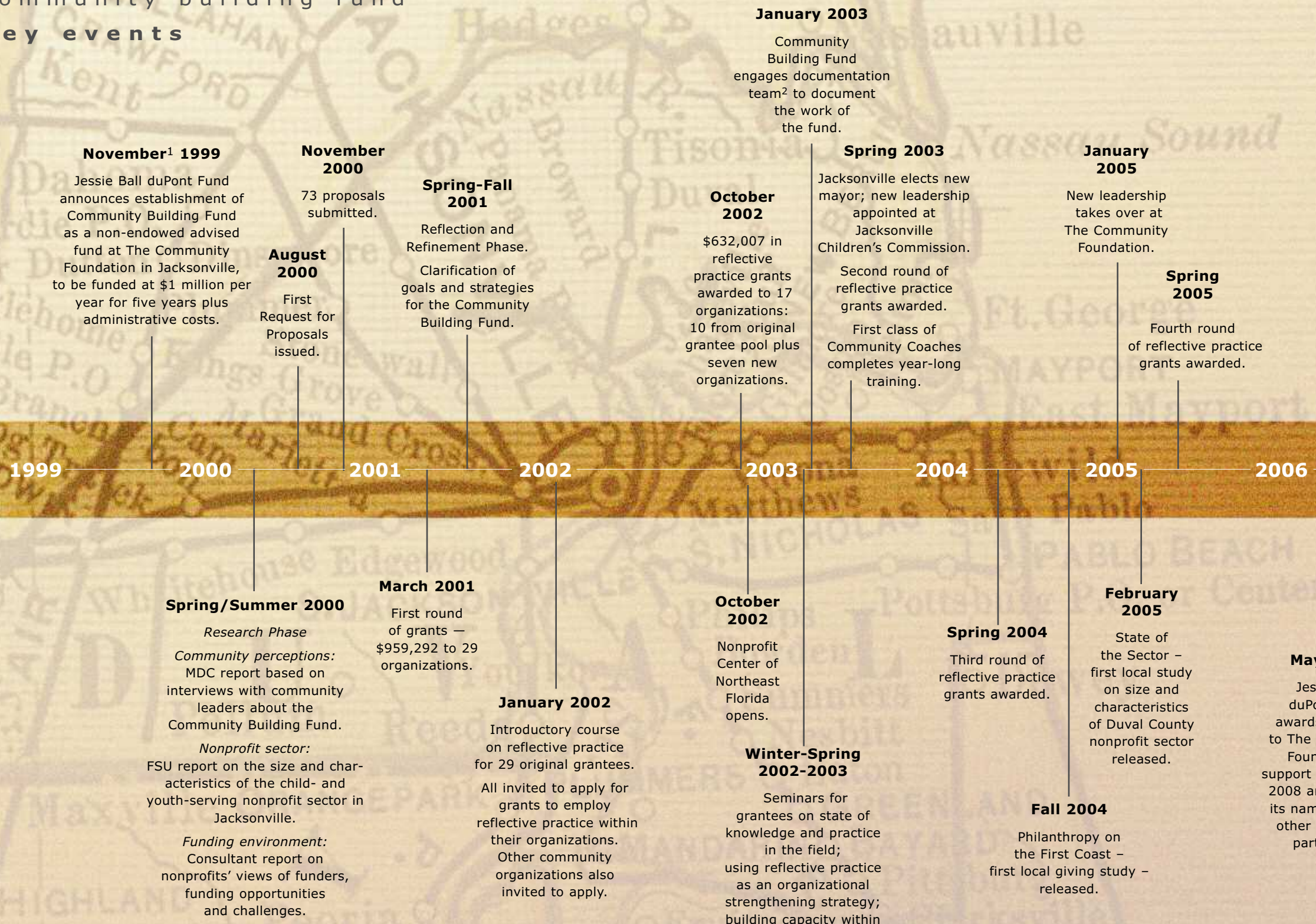
² At the time the Community Building Fund was established, Waters was executive director of Jacksonville’s PACE Center for Girls, a nonprofit serving troubled girls. She joined The Community Foundation in 2001 and became its president in 2005.

³ Brower counted only those 501 (c)(3) organizations that filed an informational tax return (Form 990) with the Internal Revenue Service from a Duval County address.

⁴ Kevin W. Allison, Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Nancy Stutts, Jepson School of Leadership Studies, University of Richmond; The Jacksonville Community Building Fund, Documentation Report 1, April 30, 2003.

⁵ Allison and Stutts, The Jacksonville Community Building Fund, Documentation Final Report, December 15, 2005.

community building fund
key events



November¹ 1999

Jessie Ball duPont Fund announces establishment of Community Building Fund as a non-endowed advised fund at The Community Foundation in Jacksonville, to be funded at \$1 million per year for five years plus administrative costs.

November 2000

73 proposals submitted.

August 2000

First Request for Proposals issued.

Spring-Fall 2001

Reflection and Refinement Phase. Clarification of goals and strategies for the Community Building Fund.

January 2003

Community Building Fund engages documentation team² to document the work of the fund.

Spring 2003

Jacksonville elects new mayor; new leadership appointed at Jacksonville Children's Commission.

Second round of reflective practice grants awarded.

First class of Community Coaches completes year-long training.

January 2005

New leadership takes over at The Community Foundation.

Spring 2005

Fourth round of reflective practice grants awarded.

1999

2000

2001

2002

2003

2004

2005

2006

Spring/Summer 2000

Research Phase

Community perceptions: MDC report based on interviews with community leaders about the Community Building Fund.

Nonprofit sector: FSU report on the size and characteristics of the child- and youth-serving nonprofit sector in Jacksonville.

Funding environment: Consultant report on nonprofits' views of funders, funding opportunities and challenges.

March 2001

First round of grants — \$959,292 to 29 organizations.

January 2002

Introductory course on reflective practice for 29 original grantees.

All invited to apply for grants to employ reflective practice within their organizations. Other community organizations also invited to apply.

October 2002

Nonprofit Center of Northeast Florida opens.

Winter-Spring 2002-2003

Seminars for grantees on state of knowledge and practice in the field; using reflective practice as an organizational strengthening strategy; building capacity within the organization; and other topics.

Spring 2004

Third round of reflective practice grants awarded.

February 2005

State of the Sector — first local study on size and characteristics of Duval County nonprofit sector released.

Fall 2004

Philanthropy on the First Coast — first local giving study — released.

May 2006

Jessie Ball duPont Fund awards \$795,000 to The Community Foundation to support CBF through 2008 and removes its name, allowing other funders to participate.

¹ At the time, the Jessie Ball duPont Fund operated on a November-October fiscal year. The Fund now operates on a calendar year.

² Documenters were Kevin Allison of the Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute at Virginia Commonwealth University and Nancy Stutts of the Jepson School of Leadership Studies at the University of Richmond.

The Community Coaches Program

The Jessie Ball duPont Community Building Fund was launched as a five-year initiative in Jacksonville, but within the first 18 months, questions of sustainability arose.

The Community Building Fund was established to help build the organizational capacity among nonprofits serving children and youth. But building capacity in a nonprofit, service organization is not a discrete activity. It is an ongoing activity, one that occurs in an environment of ever-changing boards of directors, funding streams, community demands and organizational needs.

In short, the Community Building Fund could find itself frustrated in its efforts to make a long-term difference in organizational capacity through a relatively short-term investment in organizations. The Community Building Fund also needed to increase the capacity of the community to support nonprofit organizations in a structural way.

To respond to this challenge, the Community Building Fund established the Community Coaches Program.

The coaches program emerged in 2001, as the Community Building Fund advisors refined the work of the initiative and identified three core strands of work: grantmaking, convening and coaching. The Community Building Fund would make grants to individual organizations to support their capacity building efforts; would bring together these organizations for group learning and

community-building; and would develop a community program of coaches to provide ongoing resources to nonprofits after the five-year Community Building Fund initiative had expired.

The Community Coaches Program began in 2002, with 20 individuals in the first class.

Participants committed to undergo a year-long training and learning process, after which they would contribute 10 hours of pro-bono coaching services to a local nonprofit serving children and youth. Leading the program was Juan Sepulveda, an expert in community problem solving, community organizing and politics, who had worked with the Rockefeller Foundation's Common Enterprise Initiative. A local staff person was identified to provide logistical support to the program.

As with the grantmaking side of the initiative, the first year proved to be a learning year. Two main issues emerged:

The need to expand the curriculum, which was focused on organizational development, to include information on how best to

serve children and youth, and make it more relevant to the Jacksonville community.

The need to be more strategic about building and deploying the emerging cadre of community coaches.

In response, program leaders changed the curriculum for subsequent classes, placing more emphasis on youth development and aligning the curriculum with the reflective practice techniques that were being supported through individual grants.

And the program leaders and advisors began to address issues around participant selection and coach deployment.

One of the issues that troubled the first class of coaches was achieving the confidence necessary to go into an organization and serve as an effective coach. Some organizational development topics, such as human resources and finance, require a depth of expertise not achievable in the context of the coaches' training program. Advisors realized that, if they were to build an effective cadre of community coaches, they needed to recruit participants with existing expertise in a diverse array of subjects, relying on the coaches program to build on and contextualize that expertise.

But of perhaps greater concern, the advisors began to see the challenges of deployment. How would coaches, post-training, connect with community organizations? How could organizations express a need or desire for a coach?

Who would serve as the matchmaker? What type of evaluation and accountability systems would be in place to assess customer satisfaction? How would the advisors know if coaches had fulfilled their pro-bono obligations?

The answer emerged from the Nonprofit Center of Northeast Florida, which had been established in Jacksonville in 2002 with significant support from the Jessie Ball duPont Fund. Jonathan Lever, the Center's director, suggested that the Center take over the Coaches Program operating it much as a law or consulting firm: "clients" in need of a coach would approach the Center, which then would match the client needs with an appropriate coach. The Center would take on the responsibility of tracking pro-bono hours, conducting followup evaluations with clients and maintaining the roster of available coaches.

In 2004, the Nonprofit Center established the "coaching firm," with three key goals:

- Strengthening the "back end" of the Coaches Program;
- Increasing the likelihood that a critical mass of coaches will continue coaching even after completing their 10 days of *pro bono* service; and
- Proving the Nonprofit Center with a signature program and cementing it as the respected knowledge, support and advocacy center for nonprofit organizations in the region.



Juan Sepulveda



Sam Tsyver, Girl Scouts of the Gateway Council, Jana Ertrachter, consultant, and Laurie Price, Hope Haven Children's Clinic and Family Center (L-R) all participated in the Coaches Program

Overall, four classes of coaches were trained through the Community Coaches Program. Additionally, in 2005, a special class of 16 funders took the complete training program

Early on, the Community Building Fund documentation team had identified the local donor community as "bright, creative, and well-intentioned but notably individualistic. Each had a thoughtful, clear understanding of his or her own foundation's agenda and approach, but evidenced only limited awareness of what other local donors are doing to provide a stronger youth-serving system."

As the Coaches Program matured, the idea developed to invite a class of donors to experience the program, providing them with a common under-

standing of good practices in youth development, organizational development issues and local knowledge.

By 2007, 75 individuals had completed the Community Coaches Program (excluding the donors) and, as of late 2007, 69 were enrolled with the Nonprofit Center as coaches. Typically, the Center has 10 coaches engaged in work with local nonprofits at any given time.

Jim Penrod and Jana Ertrachter both participated in the coaches program. Both were working in the nonprofit field as consultants in organizational development prior to entering the coaches program. Both have fulfilled their required pro-bono commitment and continue to provide some services free of charge through the coaches program.

They see great synergy between the training that nonprofits received through the Community Building Fund and the resources that now are provided by the coaches program.

"The reflective practice work supported by the Community Building Fund has given nonprofit leaders permission to think beyond the next day," said Ertrachter. "The coaches program has provided the resources and tools that they may need to do that."

It also has created change in the way organizations address challenges.

"In my work with organizations, I have seen a lot more light bulbs go on because the leaders have seen the pieces come together," Ertrachter said. "To a much greater degree they are relying on data and research as the foundation for their decision making."

"It is my perception that nonprofits have better relationships with funders now," said Penrod. "There is a more collaborative spirit. Foundations are more understanding of where nonprofits are and how they are living."

That collaborative feeling also is present among nonprofits, he said.

"This work has gotten people talking to each other in ways that they were not before," said Penrod. "The Coaches Program includes a lot of the prime leaders in the nonprofit community – many are now coaches – and that has stimulated shared problem solving and resource sharing.

"As organizations look inward and begin asking questions about their organization and begin getting an understanding of their role as a business, they are confronting a lot of truths about the state of the sector, which is really in crisis. They begin to reach out across boundaries, rather than seeing each other as competitors."



Jim Penrod

Nonprofit Perspectives

Jacksonville Children's Commission

St. Vincent's Hospital

Theatreworks

Cathedral Arts Project

Girl Scouts of Gateway Council

Jewish Family & Community Services

Jacksonville Children's Commission

No effort to strengthen Jacksonville's youth-serving nonprofits would be effective without inclusion of the Jacksonville Children's Commission.

Established as an autonomous body within the executive branch of Duval County government, the Commission channels local, state and federal government funds to youth-serving agencies and works to build organizational effectiveness, particularly among child-care agencies.

In 2003, the Commission's board hired a new director – Linda Lanier, who had a background in nonprofit leadership in Duval County. Within months of taking office, Lanier was awarded a \$40,000 grant from the Jessie Ball duPont Community Building Fund to support reflective practice work at the Commission.

With a governance structure that included a board of political appointees and a new executive director, revisiting the history of the Commission was an important first step in the process and resulted in "a shared foundation of learning and thinking that brought us all to a compatible level of knowledge and a true shared vision," said Lanier.

The discovery phase of the process helped the participants see the role that the Commission had taken with its investments to date and understand alternative investment strategies that might be beneficial in the future.



For instance, the analysis revealed that most of the Commission's work to date had focused on improving services to and conditions for children and youth, but little if any of the work had focused on reforming systems and engaging the community in change efforts.

Moreover, the analysis highlighted the limitations of the Commission's capacity: "There is a huge gap in resources and outcomes between children of affluent families and children of low-income families," Lanier wrote in 2006. "JCC's focus on prevention and early intervention funding has been valid and particularly successful in the case of after-school programs. However, JCC funding alone is not going to be able to make up the difference for low-income children. [But] JCC has the potential to exert leadership [and] to identify partners and additional resources."

Beginning in late 2006, the Commission developed a new strategic plan shaped by the lessons learned through reflective practice: emphasizing best practices, exercising greater community leadership, and increasing advocacy efforts. In short, the reflective practice work helped the Commission understand the importance of its work historically, but see the need to move beyond "providing programs" to providing the community leadership needed to support more long-term and systemic change.

"Undertaking a strategic planning process using reflective practice took at least twice as long as we thought it would," Lanier wrote, "but has been tremendously important for determining whether we are 'doing the right things,' and whether we are 'doing the right things right.'"

St. Vincent's Hospital

Sometimes, community organizations confront needs of such proportions that they must think strategically about how best to target their resources. And they must look beyond their own organizations to find the answers.



In 2003, the St. Vincent's Health System, under the auspices of the St. Vincent's Foundation, used reflective practice to help in such a strategic and collaborative endeavor.

Since the early 1990s, St. Vincent's had operated mobile health units, delivering health care services to migrant workers in the agricultural communities surrounding Jacksonville and, more recent-

ly, to underserved urban neighborhoods in Jacksonville. The programs had developed excellent reputations for delivering quality medical care, and the urban program had been effective at meeting both the acute and preventive care needs of hundreds of Duval County young people.

But by 2002, the St. Vincent's staff wanted to understand more about the extent of community need in Jacksonville and use that knowledge to inform its service delivery plans. They wanted to provide services "not just where they are *needed* but where they are *most needed*."

St. Vincent's Foundation was awarded a \$31,300 reflective practice grant from the Jessie Ball duPont Community Building Fund in 2002. Through interviews, needs assessments and professional market

analysis, St. Vincent's developed a clear picture of community need, and it was alarming.

More than 33,000 children in Jacksonville lived in pockets of poverty with no health insurance and little access to basic primary health care. Their access to health care, typically, was fragmented and dependent upon a rapidly changing and increasingly complex patchwork of private, community

and government programs. A host of socioeconomic factors presented barriers, such as lack of transportation, conflicts with work schedules, and lack of insurance or financial resources.

Against such staggering need, St. Vincent's needed to determine where and how to best deploy its resources. Through the collaborative emphasis of reflective practice, St. Vincent's connected with the Duval County Public Schools and United Way of Northeast Florida, which operates full-service schools in 21 public schools throughout the city. Full-service schools bring a range of health and social services to high-risk students and families in difficult neighborhoods.

Through another partnership, St. Vincent's obtained a grant from the Ronald McDonald House Charities to provide a \$350,000 mobile medical unit to target adolescents in these school settings. Partnerships with the Duval County Health Department, the University of Florida's Pediatric Program and other community organizations resulted in a broad-based initiative with extensive community buy-in.

In 2004, St. Vincent's Ronald McDonald Care Mobile began providing acute and wellness services to children in underserved areas of Duval County. The mobile van staff provides primary health care, school physicals, immunizations, hearing and vision screenings, dental referrals and early detec-



tion and referrals for asthma, diabetes and heart problems.

Today, St. Vincent's staff says, "The Care Mobile initiative has evolved into one of the most successful, community-wide efforts to bring those critically needed services to those underserved children and youth of our community."

Theatreworks

For many schoolchildren in North Florida, their only exposure to live theater is through programs brought to them by Theatreworks, which brings children's touring theater to Jacksonville for performances dedicated to school children.



Performances are presented in theaters and school auditoriums to more than 90,000 children and their families each year. Programs include study guides and other materials to connect the performances to classroom subjects.

In 2003, Theatreworks received a \$38,459 reflective practice grant from the Jessie Ball duPont Community Building Fund to evaluate the effective-

ness of its program. Through surveying customers – teachers, students, family members and staff who attend performances – “we learned more about who makes decisions in schools and how best to target our marketing,” said Rita Kent, executive director. That understanding allowed Theatreworks to change marketing strategies and save \$80,000 in costs over two years.

Just as importantly, the reflective practice process resulted in a flattened approach to staff organization and management, with broader engagement across the board.

“The old model was a hierarchy with lots of silos,” Kent said, “and we were losing new employees because they weren’t sharing information. Now the organization is much flatter, much more team-oriented with more redundancies.”

Kent admits that the process was a challenge, and Theatreworks eventually sought and was granted a continuation grant to complete the process.

“The first grant really just gets you receptive to reflective practice. It’s all Greek at first and then you get it. The second grant then makes perfect sense.”

Girl Scouts of Gateway Council

In 2004, Girl Scouts of Gateway Council was anticipating momentous change: the addition of as many as 12 new counties to its service area, implementation of a new mentoring program, sale of an existing camp and development of a new camp, and the launch of a capital campaign. At the same time, the Girl Scouts felt they needed to increase diversity within their ranks, grow membership and strengthen communications. It was a daunting agenda, even for an organization as mature as the Girl Scouts.

The organization requested and received a \$50,000 reflective practice grant from the Jessie Ball duPont Community Building Fund in fall 2004, with the goal of engaging an experienced consultant to help lead board and staff through a process of managing change. During the next three years, the work was comprehensive, both in terms of the range of parties engaged and the scope of work undertaken.

Through research and analysis, the Girl Scouts looked at every facet of their operation, from the organization’s history to its financial performance and market segments. But they also looked outside of the organization – at other organizations that provided similar ser-

vices and at potential customers who had walked away.

Additionally, the Girl Scouts used a variety of tools to hear from a broad range of voices: focus groups, surveys, individual interviews and organizational interviews.

“[Reflective practice] has provided all of us with a different way of thinking – looking at what the needs of the clients are and keeping them at the center of our work,” said Gateway Council CEO Sam Tsyver.



“Before, we only looked internally – only at our clients, not at disaffected or potential clients. Reflective practice has encouraged us to search for best practices, not only within Girl Scouts but within the competition. And it has allowed more people to be involved in strategic thinking within the organization.”

Cathedral Arts Project

The opportunity to engage in reflective practice came at a critical point in time for the Cathedral Arts Project. The program, which provides after-school arts programming to students at low-income public schools in Duval County, was 10 years old and had just hired a new executive director.

"I was brought in...with the charge to take us to the next level," said executive director Kimberly Hyatt in 2003. "In the past, the next level would have been determined only by the perception that 'more is better.' We are now making the transition to 'better is more.'"

That year, Cathedral Arts was awarded a \$48,934 grant from the Jessie Ball duPont Community Building Fund to support reflective practice work. Hyatt's reflective practice agenda included:

- Learning everything possible about the market's need for arts programming such as theirs, who else was providing it and where their services overlapped or left gaps.

- Reviewing all existing research on effectiveness of arts programming for at-risk elementary school students and understanding the best strategies to achieve optimum outcomes.

- Listening to the perspectives of customers: school officials, parents, children and other stakeholders.

- Exploring the organization's motivations, goals, opinions and attitudes.

After 18 months of work with a cross section of staff and board and three consultants, Hyatt reported that demand for arts education for at-risk elementary students far exceeded supply in Jacksonville, and that Cathedral Arts was by far the largest after-school provider of those services. This was a surprise; staff had assumed that there were many other providers in the market and that, in some areas, there would be market saturation. Hyatt also reported that parents of Cathedral Arts students were better educated than expected, with more than half of parent participants reporting some level of college education. And, of particular note, while students talked about their "class" at home, they seldom mentioned the name "Cathedral Arts," a clear sign of branding challenges.

These findings provided part of the foundation for a strategic plan for operations developed by the staff and board.

In order to adhere to the "better is more" philosophy, the plan calls for enrollment to have a soft cap of around 1,200 students annually through 2010 and for programming to grow, not by numbers of students, but by depth, through such methods as guest artists, increased exhibition and performance opportunities, field trips, mentoring and character building activities, balanced with literacy approaches and active service learning partnerships.

Cathedral Arts staff also began measuring student outcomes along seven metrics using pre- and post-program assessments.

"There is no doubt whatsoever that we are better equipped to continue moving forward, unleashing the creative spirit of young people and empowering them to succeed," said Hyatt.



Jewish Family & Community Services

Jewish Family & Community Services is a mature nonprofit, with a rich history and a wide array of services. Founded in 1917, it provides mental health counseling, emergency financial and food assistance, older adult services,



foster care and protective supervision, children's comprehensive assessments, adoption and support groups.

But even mature, stable organizations can be rocked by change.

In the early part of the decade, Jewish Family & Community Services expanded

its involvement with children in the dependency system, at the request of the Florida Department of Children and Families. In just three years, from 2001-2004, Jewish Family & Community Services saw its staff almost triple and its client load more than double in this one field of work.

The impact was staggering.

"As an agency with over 50 employees, we are now subject to legislative mandates from which we were previously exempt," executive director Iris Young wrote in 2004. "The risk management issues and legal liabilities have grown geometrically. The information technology needs have expanded. We no longer fit in one location and we have staff scattered at alternate sites. This one program is so much larger than any of our other programs that it is a continuous management challenge

to create the time to focus on the other programs within the Agency."

Moreover, she realized the agency was more vulnerable to shifting legislative priorities and financial support.

In 2004, Jewish Family & Community Services was awarded a \$50,000 grant

from the Jessie Ball duPont Community Building Fund to engage in reflective practice. The organization needed to analyze how change had been handled and understand better its long-term impact on the organization. Through surveys, focus groups, individual interviews and study of best practices, leadership and staff developed techniques and practices to help manage the changed pace and volume of work and increased demands on the organization.

New strategies for communication – horizontal and vertical – were implemented, from streamlined manager meetings, to creative thinking groups, breakfasts with the executive director, and weekly meetings between the executive director and board chair.

At the same time, new supports were put into place for staff, including training, intern opportunities, new technology, employee recognition, and evaluation of space needs.

"Reflective practice proved to be a win/win situation for all involved," said Stephanie Majeskey, director of operations. "The agency is stronger and more unified thanks to reflective practice. Our services to clients have improved and our entire response to managing change has been strengthened."

Credits:

Content – Mary Kress Littlepage, KBT & Associates, Jacksonville, Florida
Photographs – Laird, Jacksonville, Florida, pages 7, 13, 17, 20 and 22
Design – Glenn Ivie Advertising, Art & Graphic Design, Jacksonville, Florida
Printing – Hartley Press, Jacksonville, Florida



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