

SHENANDOAH COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
Building a Sustainable Future for the Shenandoah County area...Telling Our Community
Stories...Looking for Stories that Need to be Told

Presentation to Woodstock Rotary Club 2/11/09 by Elizabeth H. Cottrell

It was a dark and stormy night. Three men were seated around a campfire. One man said, "Pedro, tell us a story!" And this is the story that Pedro told...

We all love a good story, and the story of a community is told through the collective stories of its people and their heritage—their joys and sorrows, their losses and their abundance, their courage and resilience in the face of adversity, their adaptation to change, and their ability to prepare for the future.

Ten years ago, several men and women of great vision saw a story unfolding in Shenandoah County, and they wanted to change the ending. They felt a community foundation was the ideal way to accomplish that.

- They saw local philanthropy dollars going to corporate headquarters of charities outside of Shenandoah County before some small amount of it trickled back to benefit our local citizens.
- They saw county residents with the desire to give or leave money to their community but thinking they had to be rich to do it or thinking that they couldn't be generous to their favorite charities without depriving themselves of needed income during their lifetime or their heirs of inheritance.
- They were hearing stories themselves – such as the elderly lady who made a generous donation to her local fire department. Not knowing any better, she sold a large amount of appreciated stock, paid the significant capital gains tax, and then gave them cash. Had she donated the stock to a community foundation for the BENEFIT of that fire department, the Foundation could have sold the stock without owing any tax, the fire department would have been spared the administrative hassle of handling and investing the assets, and the donor would have known her wishes would be carried out in perpetuity. She could have specified that the Foundation pay only annual income to the charity from her assets or be allowed to use principal for their emergency or capital needs.
- They were also hearing stories of other community foundations in the country that were 20, 40, 60 years old, whose endowment-building efforts were so successful that millions of dollars a year in income from those endowments were being put back into those communities in grants, scholarships, and support programs for local nonprofits.

So from this vision, the Shenandoah Community Foundation was born in 1999, fueled by initial gifts from several generous donors. It was given a big boost when the Shenandoah County Public School System moved the responsibility for investing and managing over half a million dollars in their Citizens Scholarship Fund to the community foundation and still maintained all the original criteria for awarding those scholarships. Several of the high schools have since moved scholarship funds under the community foundation

umbrella and off of their school books. Today we have 36 funds in addition to our operating and unrestricted grants funds, and our assets are right at \$1.2 million. We have made grants and scholarships of well over \$300,000 to meet area needs since the Foundation began.

Each one of these funds has a story. Herb Parker's story is one I love to tell. Herb was a founding member of the Shenandoah Community Foundation. When he was diagnosed with a terminal disease and wanting to put his affairs in order, he knew that using the Foundation as a vehicle was a simple and cost-effective way to support his four favorite local charities: The Fort Valley Museum, the Fort Valley Community Center and Library, the Shenandoah County Library Archives, and the Shenandoah Community Foundation. Through his bequest—and at no cost to his estate—permanent endowment funds were established in his name for each of these entities, and they will enjoy the annual income from those funds forever. What a lasting legacy!

Philanthropy is often an outpouring of thanksgiving. The board of our wonderful Response organization, dedicated to combating domestic violence, wanted a way to thank and recognize their long-time volunteer Phoebe Kilby. In gratitude, they created the Phoebe Kilby Empowerment Fund, a freedom fund for victims of abuse who need education to go back into the work force and support themselves and their children. What an incredible tribute with lasting results. And by creating an agency fund with the Foundation, Response is now letting us help them tell their story.

Sometimes the story is quiet but incredibly dramatic in its impact. A generous and anonymous donor, a Shenandoah County native with a deep love for the valley, understood the power of the Foundation's work and appreciated that our most urgent need was income for operating and building the organization while we accomplished the very slow task of building endowment. This donor created a charitable lead trust, making the Foundation its beneficiary. For the next 19 years, the Foundation will receive close to \$100,000 a year in income for administrative and grant-making priorities. After that time, the assets in the trust will revert back to this person's heirs.

Our stories are often bittersweet. The loss of a young person by accident or illness sends ripples of grief throughout the whole community. Colton Lindamood, son of your own fellow Rotarian, Cathy, was a vibrant, active young man who enjoyed life and loved anything he could do outdoors. He was a member of FFA and part of his school's award-winning Ag-Mechanics Team. After his tragic accidental death last year, his mother's employer, Farmers & Merchants Bank, generously established the Colton T. Lindamood Memorial Fund to promote interest in the study of agriculture and auto mechanics at Central High School. Fund-raising events sprang up, and grief was turned into action as the family and friends of this remarkable young man came together to create a "forever" way to honor his memory. That fund has received donations of over \$13,000 and will yield an income of over \$500 a year.

You Woodstock Rotarians were an active part of the Jessica Pumphrey story.

- the Marge Moyers Fund supports county youth pursuing a career in the field of Education
- The Punky Riley Fund helps indigent children attend summer county camps
- the Bob Crantz Memorial Fund provides scholarships for college-bound golfers
- The Joshua Robitaille Fund supports community education of bipolar disease,
- The William C. and Evelyn E. Lambert Fund supports youth development
- The John C. Copp Scholarship, the Michael Morehead Scholarship, and the Brandon Kelly Dawson Athletic Scholarship are all awarded to college-bound seniors in the county based on specific criteria.
- and the Shenandoah County Free Clinic-Dr. Charles Miller Fund supports the recruitment and retention of medical staff at the clinic.

Every memorial fund not only honors a life well-lived but also perpetuates the essence of that life in a tangible way.

Just as there is a story behind each donation, there are stories created when grants are made by the Foundation to charitable organizations in the county. SEARCH, Inc. provides an essential group home for the mentally disabled in the county. The van they used to take their residents to doctors' appointments, jobs, or workshops was on its last legs. Without a 2008 grant from the Shenandoah Community Foundation to purchase the vehicle without debt, they would have been in a desperate situation. And since appreciation begets its own good will, SEARCH recently withdrew its application for another grant in 2009, saying that they wanted us to use our limited monies to meet other critical needs in the county this year.

The Shenandoah County chapter of the American Red Cross was faced with a daunting challenge. Their mission includes emergency preparedness, but they had no cots to use for emergency shelters, if there were a need for one. With a grant from the Foundation, they purchased 50 cots which are now being used for simulation training in conjunction with local Fire and Rescue, the county's Emergency Operations Center, and the Virginia Department of Emergency Management.

The Shenandoah County Free Clinic was about to meet a major need in providing dental services to indigent county citizens, but their old computer systems would not accommodate the tracking, charting and billing. A large grant from the Community Foundation enabled them to purchase appropriate dental software for their new clinic.

The Art Group in Mt. Jackson has been known not only for its encouragement of the arts and support of its artist members, but also for their community outreach. They painted a mural in a pediatric area of the hospital and donated artwork for youth fund-raising projects. When they learned that Northwestern Community Services had discontinued their art therapy services here and abandoned the Shenandoah County children who had been participating, The Art Group members swung into action. Using a grant from the Community Foundation, they are providing art therapy sessions for 8-12 year olds two days a month and hope to expand to once a week. Through this creative outlet, children

learn to accomplish a project, express themselves in a non-judgmental environment, interact with adults in a positive way, and cultivate social skills through this interaction.

So our stories are being told and are beginning to resonate in wonderful ways throughout Shenandoah County. But growth presents its own challenge, and our board realized that to take the Foundation to the next level, we needed more staff than our wonderful volunteers could provide. We were proud to hire your fellow Rotarian, Cindy Soltis, as our first ever part time Executive Director.

Cindy is a native of Shenandoah County and a graduate of Central High School. She earned a Bachelor's degree from James Madison University and a Master's degree from Marymount University.

She has spent most of her professional career working in the field of Human Resources. Besides her work with the Foundation, she works as a business trainer for Lord Fairfax Community College and as an HR consultant. She is a certified Myers-Briggs instructor and holds both Senior and Global Professional certifications from the Society for Human Resource Managers.

Cindy is involved in her community as a member of the Woodstock Rotary Club and serves on the Board for ShenPaco Industries, the Shenandoah Memorial Hospital Foundation, the Shenandoah Valley Music Festival and the Shenandoah County Leadership Council for the American Cancer Society. Outside of our community, she is a board member of the South Atlantic Division for the American Cancer Society and serves on a number of its national committees.

Cindy's heart for service and knowledge of this area made her a wonderful candidate, and she brings her own vision for the Shenandoah Community Foundation and the impact it will have in fulfilling our byline: *"Connecting People Who Care with Causes That Matter."*