Antonia’s Corner

Momentum is building across the country, inspired by President Obama’s call for cross-sector collaboration to change the trajectory of boys and men of color. On May 12th, this drive for change was palpable, when the White House’s “My Brother’s Keeper” Task Force visited Los Angeles. California Community Foundation’s Building a Lifetime of Options & Opportunities for Men (BLOOM) initiative was featured as a model, which is a tribute to the passion and commitment of the donors, advisory board members and others who have helped shape BLOOM.

BLOOM combines education, life skills and career training to create a more positive future for young Black males in South L.A., who are or have been under County probation supervision. Black males represent 10 percent of the County’s youth population, yet comprise 30 percent of all adolescents under probation supervision. A 10 percent reduction would save nearly $50 million, while more skilled, employable young men would encompass a new segment of taxpayers.

BLOOM has the potential to be replicated nationwide and inspires us increase our efforts in L.A. County. Results show that 90 percent of participants have not re-offended. More than 1,700 individuals and families have come to CCF to discover their passion and build a better future. BLOOM demonstrates that when Angelenos come together to realize those passions, the outcome can transform lives nationwide.

Sincerely,

Antonia Hernández
President & CEO

to learn more about BLOOM, please visit calfund.org/bloom

Bringing Passion into Focus

When Cynthia Watts was seven years old, a pair of glasses transformed her whole world. “It was life-changing. Everything suddenly looked so different.” Her new glasses allowed her to ignite a passion for learning, to see the board, participate and succeed in school, eventually earning degrees from both Yale and Harvard. Being able to see meant being able to excel.

Cynthia’s story isn’t uncommon. Close to 250,000 California students have untreated vision problems, and studies show that 95 percent of first graders who need glasses don’t have them. Students with untreated eye problems have lower academic performance and increased behavioral problems, which can impact the entire trajectory of their lives.

Cynthia and her friend and colleague, Austin Beutner, were shocked when they heard those numbers. “An educator who I know came up to me and said about 15 percent of the kids in public schools can’t see the board,” Beutner said. “I asked around and said, well, this seems like a problem we can solve.” He asked Cynthia to be a part of the team that would launch Vision to Learn, a new nonprofit dedicated to providing free eye exams and glasses to elementary school students in low-income communities throughout California.

Cynthia couldn’t say no. “The case was so compelling. This was something I could make time for,” Cynthia said.

Her experience meant she could give more than just money. “Austin wanted to bring the skills we’ve learned in business: data and metrics, change as you get direction, evaluate quickly, learn quickly and iterate quickly,” Cynthia said. “All those were critical to being able to expand and evolve quickly, because that’s the way we’re used to it.”

Vision to Learn even arranged a partnership with the Dodgers, to get the word out to kids. Catcher A.J. Ellis talked to students about needing outstanding vision to be a professional baseball player and the difference his glasses have made in his career. “It’s made a real impact. Seeing professional athletes in their glasses has made these kids feel that wearing glasses is cool,” Cynthia said.

The result is a high-impact, rapidly-growing organization. In its first two years, Vision to Learn has provided free eye exams and free glasses to almost 19,000 children, with more than 400 school visits in L.A. County alone. All while keeping their cost for glasses comparable to or lower than major suppliers like Target or Walmart. But the most important outcome is yet to be seen. “We never know which of these kids is going to be the one that finds a cure for cancer... but one of them probably will.”

Cynthia feels lucky to have been able to contribute her skills to Vision to Learn and to share with her children her passion for giving. “I’ve worked hard in life, and I’ve also been blessed to get the things I needed, from glasses, to good public schools, to parents who taught me about being in a community and giving,” Cynthia said. “It is critical to my husband and I that we’re actively giving back, both with our time and with our money, and providing that model for our own children.”
Planning your estate means making decisions about how best to provide for your family and favorite causes once you are gone. While you may know which organization(s) or which cause(s) you wish to support, it can be difficult to determine the best way to accomplish your goals.

California Community Foundation specializes in serving as a resource to donors, so we can confidently recommend the optimal structures and strategies to maximize impact as efficiently as possible. Although there are many considerations that affect your decision, the following benefits of partnering with a community foundation should be considered in any sound analysis.

A community foundation serves as the guardian of donor intent, forever. Expert staff are available to help you determine which organizations and/or causes are important to you and to discuss impact, leverage, desired outcomes, costs, and whether you would like surviving family members to be involved in the process. Should you decide that working with a community foundation is the best approach, we will work with you to draft a document that provides guidance to foundation staff for generations to come.

CCF deeply values its responsibility to steward Angeleno donors’ intent over the generations. We welcome the opportunity to consult with you to achieve the best outcomes.

How CCF Adds Value To Your Donation

- If you want to support a specific cause, staff can choose the most effective organizations, keeping current over time. If a cause ceases to exist (such as a disease being cured), staff will find another cause that closely reflects your original intent.
- If you want to support a specific organization, foundation staff can ensure that funds are distributed in annual installments, to provide a steady source of income that is not subject to the whims of a specific board or staff member who may be in place at the time of the gift.
- Foundation staff can provide both resources and a neutral table for family members to engage in philanthropy.
- Use of a community foundation often provides a higher charitable deduction than use of a private foundation, as well as lower annual costs, meaning more of your gift can be used for your charitable purpose.

A gift from a will or trust allows California Community Foundation to continue to improve the lives of people living in Los Angeles, our state, our nation, and abroad – a role we have played for nearly a century. California Community Foundation can be named as a beneficiary by (1) giving a set dollar amount; (2) giving a percentage of your estate; or (3) naming us as the back-up for other beneficiaries. For additional information and sample language, please contact any member of the Development and Donor Relations Team at 213-413-4130.

By the Numbers: California Community Foundation

In 2013-14:

1,700 funds

$164 million granted

4,350 grants to L.A. County

4th largest community foundation by giving
Farida Fotouhi was six years old when her world changed forever. Her family moved from Washington, D.C. to Japan, where her father was the first American diplomat assigned to Hiroshima since the dropping of the atomic bomb.

“It was kind of an impossible assignment,” Farida recalled. “Somebody called it the world’s toughest sales job – selling America to the people of Hiroshima.” At this very young age, Farida was given the job of making friends with the children of Hiroshima, building understanding while witnessing the abject poverty they faced.

“My early years in Hiroshima gave me a feeling that has persisted all my life about wanting to care about poverty, health and the medical arena, education, and also the power of art to transform. I’d like to contribute to the cause of world peace, and it seems like these things, along with more cross-cultural understanding, can help.”

When Farida met her husband, Michael Freehling, he had a similar desire to make the world a better place, a value instilled by his parents. Michael’s father was a respected attorney who passed up a lucrative private-sector career in order to work for the government, putting in long hours to ensure the fair treatment and personal safety of working men and women.

“One of the main things he did was with the Federal Coal Mine Safety Board,” Michael said. “He wrote all of the legislation and pushed it through for coal miners, which saved hundreds and hundreds of lives.”

Michael and Farida have both found great success in their careers, but a commitment to serving others has always been a part of who they are.

“Every day, you’d see people in your own community who were starving, people who had no medical help, no source of food, no source of clean water,” Michael said. “That’s really what led me to start thinking about what we are going to do with our money and the things we’ve been fortunate enough to accumulate, to help the world and these causes.”

Through their legacy contribution to the Freehling Fotouhi Family Fund, they hope to bring cultures together and to fight poverty in perpetuity. Michael and Farida are both excited to support micro-loan programs, helping to bring Africans out of poverty by helping to start businesses and build entrepreneurial skills. During high school, Farida lived in Kaduna, in Northern Nigeria, where she saw extreme poverty coexisting with entrepreneurial energy. Farida also hopes to reignite the Fotouhi Scholars program, which brings students from Hiroshima to the United States to promote cross-cultural understanding.

To Farida and Michael, that ability to understand is at the heart of their giving. “I have this feeling for being in other people’s shoes,” Farida said, “and I think that’s a part of philanthropy.” Her husband agrees. “That’s so much a part of helping people – to walk in their shoes and understand what they are about. What their hearts are about. What their souls are about. And that’s something you can’t do on the surface.”

Farida and Michael are members of the Centennial Legacy Campaign. The Freehling Fotouhi Family Fund at the California Community Foundation will support charities in greater Los Angeles, the United States and internationally that combat poverty, hunger and disease. To learn about creating a legacy gift, please visit MyLALegacy.org.

Centennial Legacy Profile: Michael Freehling & Farida Fotouhi
Endow the future of Los Angeles County through the Centennial Legacy Campaign.

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Join the Centennial Legacy Campaign.

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