



Building Social Equality through Collaborative Relationships

Second Annual Regional Meeting

October 15, 2009

Silicon Valley Community Foundation

By Emmett D. Carson, Ph.D., CEO and President

Please join me in thanking the panel participants again for their insightful discussion. My name is Emmett Carson and I have the pleasure of serving as the CEO of Silicon Valley Community Foundation. Before we bring this year's regional meeting to a close, I want to share a few observations about the work we have been engaged in over the past year and what we hope to do, with your help, going forward. Specifically, I want to elaborate on the last paragraph on the back of your program which states:

“Our leadership is rooted in our strong point of view on social equality as well as on collaborative relationships with the nonprofit groups and institutions advancing the best ideas.”

A year ago, at this very meeting, before we fully realized the extent and depth of the economic crisis, I asked for your help in strengthening the safety-net in this community by matching \$1 million from the community foundation to provide immediate assistance to safety-net organizations. I talked about how the perfect storm of deteriorating financial markets, job lay-offs and home foreclosures had affected those who lived on main street as well as those on the side streets and the back streets. I asked for your help and asked you to engage your networks of neighbors, co-workers, and faith communities.

Your generosity was staggering and because of you we not only met the match, we exceeded it. Together, within three short months, we provided 47 food and shelter organizations across our region with a total of \$3.7 million to meet this unprecedented crisis.

- Because of you, the Legal Aid Society in San Mateo County was able to assist 1,200 families with their housing troubles.
 - Because of you, EHC LifeBuilders in three months, reached 3,254 people and provided 121,971 hot meals.
 - Because of you, Coastside Hope was able to respond to 3,900 people, including over a thousand children, seeking food assistance.
 - And, because of you, Sacred Heart was able to give 30,000 individuals and 10,000 children a three-day supplemental supply of groceries, and 250 people, including 150 children, were able to avoid homelessness by receiving emergency rental assistance.
- Please join me in thanking all of the donor advisors, private foundations, corporate partners and everyday people who came together as one region to help our community meet these ongoing challenges. Across the nation and here at home, there is a lot of talk about the need for new public-private partnerships to work in innovative ways to address the economic crisis.

Unfortunately, much of this talk is just talk without the commitment to do the hard work over time to achieve the desired results. I am proud to say that strategic and effective partnerships have become a hallmark of this community foundation.

- We have an ongoing signature partnership with Joint Venture Silicon Valley where together we produce an Index of vital statistics about San Mateo and Santa Clara counties. And this year, we developed a road show where we took our findings to Morgan Hill, Redwood City and Half Moon Bay, to put into action our philosophy of thinking regionally and acting locally.
- We partnered with the Silicon Valley Leadership Group and convened four of the leading gubernatorial candidates to meet with for-profit and non-profit CEOs to discuss our common interests with regard to affordable housing, quality education, a clean environment and a business climate that promotes full employment rather than the oxymoron of a “jobless” recovery. There can be no true recovery until people have jobs at livable wages.
- This past June, we partnered with San Mateo County government to jointly distribute \$1 million to safety-net organizations, rather than working separately, which would have led to overfunding some nonprofit organizations and underfunding others. I want to personally thank Dave Boesch, the San Mateo County Manager, for his leadership with that effort. At the same time, the community foundation also distributed \$500,000 in grants to Santa Clara County. I have had the opportunity to meet Santa Clara's new county executive, Jeffrey Smith, and we have both pledged to work closely together.
- The community foundation also has ongoing partnerships with: Stanford University to inspire and increase charitable giving in our community; Silicon Valley Education Foundation to highlight and promote the best educational practices; the Entrepreneurs' Foundation to encourage philanthropy and best practices among corporations in our region; and the Opportunity Fund to foster best practices around micro lending and economic security.

Let me digress for just a minute to say a word about the growing importance of our grantmaking strategy in the area of economic security. As we begin our difficult journey out of the Great Recession, our work around strengthening the safety-net must now be coupled with giving people financial literacy and access to the financial tools so that they can make informed financial decisions. If we do not do this, we are sowing the seeds of a future housing and credit crisis, and making the current recovery more difficult.

As one part of this overall effort, we absolutely must address predatory payday lending. Last year at this meeting, I talked about how predatory lenders were targeting poor people and charging them outrageous interest rates that could exceed 400 percent. Following the regional meeting, several of you contacted me in disbelief to say that surely charging such exorbitant interest rates could not be legal. Unfortunately, such practices are indeed legal and we have to change this.

Today, I am proud to announce that we have released a “Report on the Status of Payday Lending in California,” developed in partnership with the Public Interest Law Firm. This report, which is in your meeting bag, fully and painfully documents the history of payday lending in California and how a loan of \$300 can wind up costing \$800 in fees and interest. I encourage you to read the report, download it from our website, share it with friends, and join us in advocating for local and state reforms.

Now, I am fully aware that there are a few people who have legitimate concerns about whether the community foundation should engage in public policy and advocacy. While I fully agree that advocacy and lobbying efforts should not define the totality of all of who we are and what we do at the community foundation, we should not avoid taking principled policy positions, consistent with what the law allows when the facts are clear and compelling. We are not alone in embracing this work as community foundations across the country move away from being charitable banks to becoming community leaders who lead with facts followed by action.

This year, I am asking for your help in supporting economic security for families by joining our efforts to provide financial education, foreclosure prevention assistance, and protection from predatory payday lending practices. Specifically, I am asking you to consider doing three things.

- First, we want you to spend the time to become informed and knowledgeable about the full range of our work on economic security.
- Second, we want you to actively engage your networks and help us to inform them about our work. An easy way to do this is by becoming a fan on our newly-launched Facebook page and sending the link to your friends and networks asking them to join.
- And third, we need your financial support to help fund these efforts. We have included a one page description of how you can make a contribution in your meeting bag, and I am confident that our community will again rise to this challenge.

While some journeys may seem daunting at the start, good ideas often have a way of taking on a life of their own and making what seemed to be impossible, possible. For example, the Peninsula Partnership Leadership Council,

which is staffed by the community foundation, concluded after much debate and discussion, that a Bill of Rights for Children and Youth would provide an important barometer when considering what programs and services needed to be safeguarded, even in a climate of economic scarcity. The bill calls for such unreasonable things as believing that all of our children—all—be safe, educated, housed and healthy.

The community foundation’s board was the very first to endorse the bill, followed by the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors, the San Mateo County Board of Education and others. State assemblymember Jerry Hill became aware of the bill and introduced it as a nonbinding state resolution, which was passed by the legislature on September 4, 2009. The Bill of Rights for Children and Youth is now being adopted by communities, public bodies and nonprofit organizations across the state.

Finally, at a time of state and local budget cuts and the mounting deficits that are decimating our schools, our safety-net and our cultural centers, I want to underscore the enormous opportunity that will be presented by the upcoming Census. The Census requires that every person, regardless of citizenship status, be counted. An accurate census count of our community is the single most important opportunity that we will have over the next ten years to ensure that we get our fair share of federal funding and that we have the level of representation in the federal government to which we are entitled.

We are pleased to be partnering with the Census Bureau to help ensure that every person in our region is counted and we invite you to help us spread the word about the critical importance of this activity. In your meeting bag, we have given you a census wheel with fun facts about our nation, our state and our region. When you are finished with it, we ask that you responsibly recycle it by putting it in the reception area of your workplace or some other public place so that others may also become aware of this upcoming high-stakes activity.

In closing, I want to thank our board of directors for their dedication and oversight of the community foundation; our donor advisors and corporate partners for their generosity in supporting causes both at home and abroad; the financial and legal advisors who encourage their clients to experience the joy and fulfillment that engaged philanthropy can bring; the truly amazing nonprofit organizations that do the hard work, 24/7, preserving and improving our quality of life; and last, the community foundation’s hardworking and committed staff who truly believe that our job is to continually widen the circle and deepen the engagement. Thank you for coming and we invite all of you to join us across the street to talk with old friends, meet new ones and celebrate the meaning of community. We are adjourned.

SILICON VALLEY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION MAKES ALL FORMS OF PHILANTHROPY MORE POWERFUL

We provide visionary community leadership by identifying emerging challenges in our region. We address those challenges through our grantmaking programs, our research and our ability to bring together diverse groups of problem-solvers. We build and energize a community of philanthropists who strengthen the common good.

One of our core strengths is professional investment management of the funds individual and corporate donors entrust to us. Unlike financial management companies, we offer expert guidance on the art and science of giving. We use our expertise to make giving easy and effective, helping donors achieve their philanthropic goals whether local, national and international.

Our leadership is rooted in our strong point of view on social equality as well as our collaborative relationships with the nonprofit groups and institutions advancing the best ideas.

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