

# + notebook

VIRGINIA G. PIPER CHARITABLE TRUST

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JULY 2010



Nonprofit Executive  
Sabbaticals Offer  
Creative Disruption

Why We Invest in  
Early Care and Education

# notebook

July 2010

*Piper Notebook* is a magazine published three times each year by Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust to inform the community about the work of the Trust and its grantees in Maricopa County, Arizona.

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## LEFT

Places for quality early learning like the Phoenix Crisis Nursery FACES preschool program are essential for little children to prepare for school and life. Piper Trust places special emphasis on early care and education. See why in an interview with program director Marilee Dal Pra on page 24.

## ON THE COVER

Chevy Humphrey, president and CEO of Arizona Science Center, likes to mix it up creatively and here demonstrates the benefit of a giant lever in a game of tug-of-war, one of the permanent displays at the popular children's venue. A member of the first class of Piper Fellows in 2001, Chevy found the creative juice and the analytical muscle to achieve her goal of becoming the head of a science center. Her story is one of seven about Piper Fellows who have experienced Creative Disruption. See the special section beginning on page 4.



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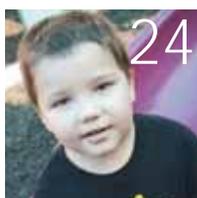
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# Of Note

JUDY JOLLEY MOHRAZ  
President and CEO



## Building and Expanding the Circle of Servant Leaders

How the Piper Fellows began is now the stuff of Piper legend. In the winter of 2000-2001 the Piper trustees and the miniscule staff in place held a series of community conversations with nonprofit leaders. The goal was to understand how the

new foundation could most effectively shape its work to respond to community needs. The CEOs were impressive—smart, committed and candid. But one other quality came through: They looked weary. Out of that recognition, the Piper Fellows sabbatical program was born.

Trustees and staff asked several questions: What if the Trust could provide one to two month sabbaticals where nonprofit leaders could be exposed to the best thinking anywhere on topics such as leadership, strategic planning or fund development? What if sabbaticals could couple professional development with personal renewal, allowing for spiritual retreats or time for reflection and renewal? What if the Trust could provide funds

not only for the Fellow but also for staff development, the people who held down the fort while the Fellows were away?

The first class of five Fellows was selected in December 2001, and the program was underway.

### Fellows Shape Program

Also part of the Piper legend is the way the Piper Fellows have owned and shaped the program themselves. With the first class we began to meet informally over breakfast to share updates, expertise and common problems. In effect, a leadership support group took shape. I thought when the second class of Fellows arrived, the first class would disband. Instead, the first class simply welcomed them and expanded the circle. And so it has been with each successive class.

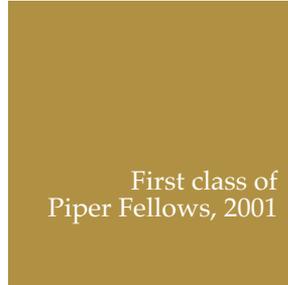
The program continues to evolve because of the Fellows' ideas and experiences. For instance, some Fellows felt the requirement to be away a month could be a hardship, so we lifted that requirement. Piper Fellows were often frustrated because cash strapped nonprofits didn't have the funds to implement some of the learnings they gained from the sabbatical. The Piper trustees responded by adding the opportunity to apply for a \$50,000



Santino Bernasconi



Mary Lynn Kasunic



First class of  
Piper Fellows, 2001



Chevy Humphrey



Linda Searfoss



Tamara Woodbury

Organizational Enhancement Award as part of the fellowship.

What we have recognized is how much the Fellows learn from each other as well as from rubbing shoulders with national experts. The monthly breakfasts continue, but more structured learning circles have emerged, led by Chris Tompkins, former Piper Fellow and now coordinator of the program.

I have learned a lot about leadership working with Piper Fellows over the past nine years. The 42 Fellows represent great diversity—from the size and mission of their organizations to their backgrounds, talents and sabbatical goals. Some are seasoned CEOs, looking for their second or third wind so they can continue to foster innovation and momentum. Others are finding their voices as leaders, honing skills they will need to guide nonprofits in tumultuous times.

### Stewards of the Future

Despite their diversity, one quality binds so many of the Fellows—that of servant leadership. Forty years ago when this concept first made its way into leadership conversations, the idea of a servant leader was a radical departure. Prevailing beliefs

about effective leadership emphasized the “command and control” model. By contrast, instead of emphasizing power residing at the top, servant leaders focus on collaboration, trust and community building. The driving desire of these leaders is their commitment to serve and to lead in order to benefit others, not simply to become more powerful themselves. I observe this quality in an extraordinary number of the Fellows.

At a time of complex social and economic problems that divide people more often than bind them together, we need leaders who can listen, empathize and see themselves as stewards, not just power brokers. They need to understand they are in positions of power and responsibility in order to challenge people to rise to their best selves. I don’t think that vision of leadership is learned during a sabbatical, but I do believe sabbaticals offer once-in-lifetime opportunities for leaders to become more effective. Equally important, they return personally renewed. Investments like this are investments in human potential and in community building.

We invite you to see the faces and hear the voices of some of these leaders in the *Notebook* profiles. \*

# Nonprofit Executive Sabbaticals



# Offer Creative Disruption

One successful nonprofit executive is close to burnout. Another does not have the resources to attend to her professional development. A third really wants to gain insights from a particular leader.

What these three executives probably share is that the challenge of making the case for a sabbatical is difficult.

A common tension for those considering a sabbatical is that time away will be disruptive. Research shows that well-designed fellowships can offer the unexpected: Creative Disruption.

“The board will think I want a vacation.”

“How can I prove that the information I’ll get will make a difference in our agency?”

“Everyone believes it will be chaos if I’m away.”

A year ago, a study turned the topic on its head. *Creative Disruption: Sabbaticals for Capacity Building and Leadership Development in the Nonprofit Sector* exposes the myth that an executive sabbatical will be a chaotic disruption, finding instead that the “creative disruption” of a well-planned sabbatical for leaders can be productive for the whole organization.

Six philanthropic organizations that support sabbatical programs—the Barr Foundation (Boston), The Durfee Foundation (Los Angeles), the Evelyn and Walter Hass, Jr. Fund (San Francisco), the Rasmuson Foundation (Alaska), the Alston/Bannerman Fellowship Program (national funder headquartered in Baltimore), as well as the Piper Trust in Phoenix—funded the research project jointly.

The six organizations together have invested in more than 325 sabbaticals for nonprofit executives over the past decade.

Creative disruption is what happens when a nonprofit executive takes a well-planned sabbatical: The staff and board step up and grow, and the leader comes back retooled, refreshed and renewed.



Well-planned executive sabbaticals build capacity for organizations and promote personal growth, health and confidence for leaders. In many organizations, succession planning, governance and the skills of the executive team all improved from the sabbatical experience.

The creative disruption report found seven major learnings:

***Sabbaticals can be an opportunity for the second-tier of leadership to gain new skills and take on new responsibilities.*** A leader on sabbatical delegates duties to other top managers. Many organizations end up restructuring management teams and decision-making is shared by the leader with other managers as a result of the sabbatical.

***The “dry run” of a sabbatical can be a best practice in succession planning.*** Interim leaders experience executive leadership first hand, giving them a keen sense of whether they want to be future CEOs. A sabbatical can give the organization insights into what leadership transition might hold.

***Executive directors who went on sabbatical were more likely to extend their tenure—not cut it short.*** Sabbaticals do not contribute significantly to leaders leaving their organizations. Seventy-five percent of survey respondents are still with the same organization.

## Sabbatical Outcomes

- 87% Greater confidence in doing the job
- 87% Better relationship with community
- 83% Better relationships with supervisees
- 81% Improved work-life balance
- 81% Better connections with family
- 76% Better physical health

From Creative Disruption report, 2009

***The sabbatical can strengthen board governance.*** Sixty percent of leaders said their boards of directors were more effective as a result of the planning and learning that went into the sabbatical. The board often comes together as a result of the leader taking a sabbatical.

***A majority of leaders who went on sabbatical reported better relationships with their staff, board, funders and community.*** Eighty-seven percent reported better relationships with the community and community partners, and a similar percentage reported more productive relationships with both board and direct reports.

***Eighty-seven percent of leaders reported increased confidence in doing their jobs.*** A large majority of survey respondents reported positive personal benefits, both tangible and intangible, resulting from their sabbaticals: improved work/life balance (81 percent) and better physical health (76 percent).

***Funders also benefited from feedback and innovative ideas from executive directors who went on sabbaticals to gain a deeper perspective on community needs. \****



### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Piper Fellow eligibility and application information:  
[www.pipertrust.org/leadership/piperfellows.aspx](http://www.pipertrust.org/leadership/piperfellows.aspx)

Creative Disruption report:  
[http://www.compasspoint.org/assets/971\\_creativedisruption.pdf](http://www.compasspoint.org/assets/971_creativedisruption.pdf)

# Free Clinic Director Offers Healthcare with Culture Twist

Janice Ertl is in the hot seat all day long, every work day at the Virginia G. Piper Medical and Dental Clinics at Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Phoenix.

As the clinic director, she works with a population of individuals and families in desperate need because of illness and disruption.

“Sometimes their health may be the only thing poor people have,” said Janice, a registered nurse who has been at St. Vincent de Paul for 17 years. “Helping them remain healthy is an important mission but it can only be achieved with a culturally sensitive approach.”

The challenge for her in 2002 when she became a Piper Fellow was both language fluency and cultural fluency in how Mexican nationals experience healthcare in their native country. She studied Spanish for four weeks in Phoenix and then faced total immersion in Cuernavaca, Mexico, where she used Spanish in a private home and in a Mexican social security hospital. The month sabbatical also enabled her to learn new ways to communicate basic health messages and different ways of dispensing medicine.

“The fellowship opened my eyes and allowed me the opportunity to become a peer with groups I wouldn’t traditionally get to know—first of all in the Mexican medical community and then back here in Phoenix with other Fellows,” said Janice.

Recognizing the burnout and turnover among free clinic staff, Janice tries to create an infrastructure that helps staff survive and flourish. And because of tighter budgets, when she has even more demands on her time and fewer opportunities for regular professional contact, she finds that her Piper Fellows learning circle is one thing she won’t give up. \*



Janice Ertl (right), clinic director of the Virginia G. Piper Medical and Dental Clinics at Society of St. Vincent de Paul, used her Piper Fellowship to become more fluent in Spanish language and culture. Programs like the teen diabetes prevention and management program (above) have a Latino underpinning that keeps patients and families coming back and following their programs.





# Sabbatical Becomes Catalyst for Board Effectiveness



Connie Phillips (above) executive director of Sojourner Center domestic violence shelter, found her Piper Fellowship was the means for building a stronger relationship between her staff and board of directors. The exuberant mural by artist Rose Johnson (left) depicts the freedom and independence that come with effectively breaking the cycle of abuse.

As executive director of Sojourner Center domestic violence shelter, Connie Phillips wanted personal and spiritual growth, leadership education beyond what she could do on her own and interaction with national leaders in the field at conferences she could never attend because of cost.

“I’ve been blessed all my 16 years to have a great board, but in reality a board has a tendency to default to the executive director and view the organization through my eyes,” said Connie.

“My sabbatical didn’t create disruption: It was a catalyst for meaningful conversations among board members and a chance for them to experience other staff members who also are capable and competent.”

She didn’t set out to build board effectiveness through her time away as a 2007 Piper Fellow but stepping aside achieved just that. In reality no crisis happened during the sabbatical, and the board had a chance to revel in the organization’s mission, people and the systems in place.

For her personally the fellowship experience was immeasurably valuable.

“An executive director must do things that you think you cannot do and I had reached a point where I felt like all the weight was on my shoulders,” said Connie “I took the time to get grounded, to realize that this work is a quest and that I’m part of a team, not alone.”

She studied performance leadership at Harvard University. She attended the national domestic violence conference. She went on a personal retreat. She pushed outside her comfort zone and took up hiking. She spent the last two weeks working the evening shift undercover at a Sojourner campus. And she returned to a thriving organization refreshed and renewed. \*

# Doctor Finds Business Confidence to Lead Large Clinic

As an obstetrician, John Swagert, MD, delivered hundreds, even thousands, of babies. It was a great career.

But when tapped to head Mountain Park Health Center in 2006, John brought keen medical expertise to the position and service on the clinic's management team but few chief executive leadership experiences.

"As an organization we are so busy getting our medical services to function, we can get tunnel vision and don't apply state-of-the-art management tools," said John. "I needed to step outside the organization, look at it and then go after the skills I didn't think we had."

He became a 2008 Piper Fellow and designed a balanced sabbatical program in three parts:

- A nonprofit business leadership course at Stanford University where, along with 50 other leaders from around the world, he learned cornerstone best practices critical in any business but particularly important in nonprofits where resources are always scarce.
- A creative internship at a Minneapolis advertising agency where he grew to understand the entire process of how to develop messages, problem-solve for clients and put together marketing pitches.
- Finally, a personal coaching phase to integrate his learnings and shape how he would communicate them to his organization through mentoring and coaching his management team.

The sabbatical proved exceptionally helpful: He gained confidence in his own skills—that he was the right person to lead the organization forward.

John concluded, "Clearly to be a viable business we must be sustainable, and the fellowship helped me balance mission and an understanding of the importance of dollars-and-cents prosperity to an organization—so we can do the next great thing in the community." \*



CEO John Swagert, MD, (right) gets a curious look from a young patient at Mountain Park Health Center community clinic. Dr. Swagert, an obstetrician by training and practice for many years, brought medical and management team experiences to his leadership position and then used a Piper Fellowship to acquire executive skills the organization needed to thrive.





# Refugee Expert Enters Spotlight and Network of Support

Robin Dunn Marcos has worked her entire career in refugee resettlement both in Africa and here in the United States. She is an expert.

When she moved to Arizona in 1996 to become executive director of the International Rescue Committee in Phoenix, she knew it was important to expand her focus beyond refugee resettlement to building relationships in the community. Refugees are legally admitted into the United States and are expected to quickly acculturate into their new community.

A 2003 Piper Fellowship had two goals: to round out her refugee knowledge by studying forced migration and to learn about messaging and honing her public speaking skills. She went to Oxford University and then back in Phoenix she worked with a communications coach.

“I had only a small amount of media experience before and knew I needed to speak appropriately about these sensitive issues,” Robin said. “Now, I confidently speak about refugee issues with all forms of media.” Robin regularly has been interviewed by international, national and local TV, radio and print media.

She is very clear that the sabbatical helped her achieve the skills and knowledge she wanted and allowed the management team to learn and take on greater leadership roles in her absence. But she also knows that she got even more: Her peer network and support system would not have happened without ongoing engagement with Piper Fellows.

“We have common challenges and to have a confidential and highly talented peer network to provide insight, share experiences, and problem solve is an invaluable resource.” said Robin.

“It has also led to collaboration and expanded services for our shared beneficiaries.” \*



Robin Dunn Marcos (left) executive director of the International Rescue Committee in Phoenix, shares a moment with Cuban refugees who work at IRC. A Burmese man (top) and an Iraqi mother and daughter (above) find relocation help, jobs and other settlement services at the local center. Robin has become an adept spokesperson on international refugee issues through her Piper Fellowship.

# Benefit of Fellowship— “Free Consultants”

When a top leader is gone, second-tier executives take on new responsibilities.

Edmundo Hidalgo, president and CEO of Arizona’s leading community development corporation Chicanos Por La Causa, Inc., learned that lesson even before he started a sabbatical as a 2008 Piper Fellow. He had been thrust into the leadership position just two years before after serving as chief operating officer for eight years.

“My comfort was in understanding process, the minute details of funding, and I couldn’t operate at that level as CEO,” said Edmundo. “In order to grow into the new role, I needed a broader perspective and the comfort of knowing the other chief officers were also growing into their positions.”

Edmundo planned to begin his fellowship with coursework at Stanford University in social entrepreneurship, but the negative economy led to the university canceling that program. Instead, he began the second phase of his sabbatical, making site visits around the country to similar agencies and programs to see social entrepreneurship in action, interspersed with ongoing Piper Fellows meetings.

With the mentoring and collegial support of other Fellows—what he calls a “host of consultants for free”—Edmundo introduced an achievement performance challenge to his 18-member management team. They now work in three cross-functional teams and all key managers learn leadership, mentorship and coaching.

“Our strategy is to coach individuals to achieve performance challenges—everything from building efficiency and green technology to serving clients more effectively and offsetting turnover,” he said.

Edmundo is extending his fellowship period so he can study social enterprise at Stanford in 2010, but beyond the formality of a sabbatical he has gained the “bonus on top of the fellowship,” the valuable peer network of Piper Fellows. \*



Edmundo Hidalgo (right), president and CEO of Chicanos Por La Causa (CPLC), found that his Piper Fellowship had a deep benefit beyond the sabbatical itself. He has instituted achievement performance challenges for his entire management team based on peer counsel from other Fellows. As a community development corporation, CPLC focuses on projects like this housing development plan (above).



# WHAT ARE YOU AFRAID OF?

DRAW YOUR FEARS HERE.



# A Sabbatical as a Best Practice in Succession Planning

“When I first interviewed at Arizona Science Center in 1998 with Sheila Grinell, I told her, ‘I eventually want to run a science center just like you,’” said Chevy Humphrey, current Science Center president and CEO.

After Sheila recovered from “Wow, you want my job!” she acknowledged later on that she was thinking about retirement and should begin thinking about grooming someone for the job.

Chevy was selected as a member of the first class of Piper Fellows in 2001. Her sabbatical took her to best practice sites around the nation, including a four-week internship at the Exploratorium in San Francisco, the oldest science center in the world.

“My Piper Fellowship was designed to complete the final phase of my professional goal of becoming a CEO in the science center industry,” said Chevy. “I set out to enhance my executive leadership skills and increase my understanding of the creative mission-oriented side—exhibition conceptualization and development.”

She came back transformed personally and professionally—“I came back on fire.”

Sheila saw that and stepped up her mentoring. The two continued their mutually respectful dialogue. When a succession plan was completed and presented to the directors, they embraced the plan wholeheartedly because the groundwork had been laid and the tough conversations had occurred.

And in naming her president and CEO, board members stipulated that Chevy also must find her own successor. They have continued to support a learning environment not just for Chevy but making professional development available to every Science Center employee.

“When I can give someone on my team that gift of learning, I know what they are getting and it’s exciting,” said Chevy. \*



Chevy Humphrey (above) used her Piper Fellowship to learn the *art* (mission-based exhibits) and *science* (executive planning and management) of running a science center. It became the grounding for her position as president and CEO of the Arizona Science Center. “What Are You Afraid Of?” (left) is a popular exhibit at the science center with a freshly cleaned chalkboard each morning for young visitors to draw or write their answers.

# Coordinator Thrives on Intensifying Fellows' Experiences

“My Piper Fellowship contributed to the Foundation for Blind Children staff creating a national model for serving blind and low-vision individuals,” said Chris Tompkins, former Foundation chief executive, now retired.

“The fellowship made a significant impact on my organization, on the services to blind and low-vision Arizonans and on me as a leader,” he said.

Chris, a 2002 Piper Fellow, said the fellowship allowed him to study best practices around the country integrating two important areas, low-vision clinics, training and rehabilitation with assistive technology. He brought information back to the Foundation for Blind Children to establish a new clinic with expanded technology.

And what has come after also is gratifying. For the past two years, Chris has been coordinator of the Piper Fellows program.

“It is a joy to serve the Fellows,” said Chris. “They love to be with each other and to hear what is going on. The goal is cross-fertilization and engaging the Fellows beyond their respective organizations and sabbatical experiences.”

Chris coordinates two leadership learning circles, one for CEOs and one for executive staff, that provide an open and safe space for Fellows to learn from one another.

“We get more positive feedback on these groups than on any other part of the ongoing program,” he said. “They can let their hair down and really use each other for important guidance and feedback.”

Monthly meetings, outside speakers, a book club and focused issue discussions round out the offerings of the Fellows program.

“There is a flow of information between the Fellows and Piper Trust through these channels that is a benefit to the individuals, to the Trust and to the community at large,” Chris added. \*

Chris Tompkins, coordinator of the Piper Fellows program, was an early participant in the sabbatical program as CEO of Foundation for Blind Children. He now works to make each Fellow's experience the best that it can be. One key is the ongoing interaction of Fellows, such as monthly learning circles to share personal leadership topics openly in a safe space.



# Grant Notes

Grants Awarded from February 9, 2010, to June 2, 2010



## Arts and Culture

**Arizona Town Hall**  
**\$25,000/12 months**  
[www.aztownhall.org](http://www.aztownhall.org)  
Spring 2011 Arizona Town Hall on the impact of arts and culture on the economy

**Arts & Business Council of Greater Phoenix**  
**\$60,000/24 months**  
[www.artsbusinessphoenix.org](http://www.artsbusinessphoenix.org)  
Two-year strategic marketing and public relations plan

## Children

**AGUILA Youth Leadership Institute**  
**\$16,750/12 months**  
[www.aguilayouth.org](http://www.aguilayouth.org)  
Computer hardware and software for Latino students preparing for college

**Back-to-School Grants**  
**\$519,900/12 months**  
Clothes for needy children at 270 Maricopa County elementary schools

**Family Promise - Greater Phoenix**  
**\$16,800/12 months**  
[www.familypromiseaz.org](http://www.familypromiseaz.org)  
Play area improvements and sports court equipment for family homeless shelter



**Miracle League of Arizona**  
**\$100,000/12 months**  
[www.mlaz.org](http://www.mlaz.org)  
Baseball facility for disabled children

**Valle del Sol, Inc.**  
**\$14,800/12 months**  
[www.valledelsol.com](http://www.valledelsol.com)  
Technology lab equipment for youth obtaining IT certification

## Education

**Arizona State University Foundation**  
**\$85,000/12 months**  
[www.asufoundation.org](http://www.asufoundation.org)  
Updated Morrison Institute Latino Education Dilemma report

**Expect More Arizona Fund**  
**\$100,000/8 months**  
[www.azfoundation.org](http://www.azfoundation.org)  
Third-year funding for public awareness of the importance of education in Arizona



**Eleven funding organizations created a Homelessness and Hunger Funders Collaborative fund of more than \$1 million** for nonprofit agencies providing critical services in the continuing economic crisis. Grants went to 15 agencies in April 2010 to A New Leaf, Inc., Association of Arizona Food Banks, Catholic Charities Community Services (Project HELP—Housing and Emergency Assistance



Links for People), Central Arizona Shelter Services, Chicanos Por La Causa, Inc., Chrysalis, Community Information and Referral, Lodestar Day Resource Center, New Life Center, Phoenix Rescue Mission, Sojourner Center, The Salvation Army, The Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Tumbleweed Center for Youth Development and UMOM New Day Centers, Inc.

**1. UMOM New Day Centers, Inc.**

Betsy Schneider, photo

**2. Society of St. Vincent de Paul**

Michael Lundgren, photo

**3. Phoenix Rescue Mission**

Damon Sauer, photo

**4. Tumbleweed Center**

for Youth Development

Jason Koster, photo

## Healthcare and Medical Research

**Lions Vision Center, Inc.**

**\$16,064/12 months**

[www.arizonalionsvisioncenter.org](http://www.arizonalionsvisioncenter.org)

Examination chair for vision screenings and telephonic equipment

**Mission of Mercy**

**\$168,300/24 months**

[www.amiissionofmercy.org](http://www.amiissionofmercy.org)

Second mobile van to increase medical services to West Valley families with limited access to healthcare

**Scottsdale Healthcare Foundation**

**\$98,860/12 months**

[www.scottsdalehealthcare.org/foundation](http://www.scottsdalehealthcare.org/foundation)

Healthy Steps program to train family medicine residents in child development practices

## Older Adults

**Aging Services of Arizona Foundation**

**\$20,000/18 months**

[www.azaha.org](http://www.azaha.org)

Leadership training program preparing emerging long-term care executives to serve older adults

**Experience Matters Consortium**

**\$17,200/12 months**

[www.azfoundation.org](http://www.azfoundation.org)

Service, learning and leadership opportunities for older adults

**McDowell Sonoran Conservancy**

**\$19,700/12 months**

[www.mcdowellsonoran.org](http://www.mcdowellsonoran.org)

Stewardship training program for older adult volunteers

## Other

**Arizona Planned Giving Institute**

**\$20,000/12 months**

[www.azebl.org/organization](http://www.azebl.org/organization)

Alumni support program for previous participants in the Arizona Endowment Building Initiative

**Valley of the Sun United Way**

**\$250,000/12 months**

[www.vsuw.org](http://www.vsuw.org)

A Community Relief grant for the Homelessness and Hunger Funders Collaborative project

**Total of Published Grants:**

**\$1,548,374**

# Why We Invest in Early Care and Education:

An Interview with Program Director Marilee Dal Pra

***Why has the Piper Trust placed special emphasis on early childhood?***

Twenty years ago we didn't know what we know today about the human brain.

Because of advancements in the neurosciences we now understand that infants need more than nutrition, healthcare and a safe environment to thrive. The brains of tiny babies only grow with human interaction. These interactions with parents and caregivers are literally food for brain development—as much so as milk is food for little bodies. Brain cells grow from repeated positive connections—gentle human touch, the compelling human voice and caring glances. These interactions actually make more brain cells.

We now know that a child's experiences in the years birth to five dictate not only well-being in those early years but also how well she will do in school, how well she will move into adolescence, transition to adulthood and then move into older adulthood.

***So, people who say that this is the parents' responsibility are right.***

Parents do play the critical role and need resources to help them parent effectively. But we should be beyond blaming families for lack of parenting skills. In many cases they simply don't have the information, and in others they don't have positive experiences themselves so they have nothing to model.

Parents who learn from parent education are not rich or poor, educated or uneducated. With the right information, all parents act differently with their kids.



Marilee Del Pra





We must remind ourselves that everyone can benefit from parent education. We were pleasantly surprised when Piper piloted the Arizona Parent Kit in Maricopa County in 2005 and 2006 that our evaluations showed a dramatic increase in parents

adopting life-changing parenting practices—such as putting babies to sleep on their backs to minimize the chances of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, increasing the incidence and duration of breastfeeding, reading to and playing with babies more frequently, and correctly using car seats.

Considering that the highest rates of preventable infant and toddler deaths in the state were from placing infants in unsafe sleeping positions and not buckling toddlers properly in car seats, we knew we were on the right track.

### ***You mentioned the parent kit. How did it come about?***

An early Trust priority was supporting programs that offer parents and other primary caregivers the best information on the science of early childhood development. Programs designed to improve parent understanding of child development had shown promising results for improving outcomes for kids. We began to investigate existing programs for improving parent knowledge.

We adapted the California Kit for New Parents as a model program and renamed it as the Arizona Parent Kit to distribute through birthing hospitals. So every baby comes with instructions, including a parent guide, baby's first book and helpful videos.

### **Arizona Parent Kit Results**

More babies are put to sleep on their backs to avoid SIDS

Increased incidence and duration of breastfeeding

Greater early literacy from reading and playing with babies

Lives potentially saved through buckling toddlers correctly in car seats



All Arizona babies now come with instructions because of a program providing beneficial materials to new parents. The program was piloted by Piper Trust and now has expanded statewide with First Things First.



### Every dollar spent



on early care and learning saves



### ***Does Piper still fund the Arizona Parent Kit initiative?***

The Trust is continuing to fund the kit for parents in Maricopa County through June 2011.

First Things First, the state agency responsible for early care and learning, took over the Arizona Parent Kit a year ago and is implementing the program statewide. From the outset the plan was to transition the project to a government agency, and we sought broad community involvement including the Governor's Office, Arizona Department of Health Services, Arizona Department of Health Security, the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System and the Arizona State School Readiness Board.

### ***The future of First Things First is in question. What is your sense of its work?***

The fact is that First Things First, even with all its challenges as a new agency, is a bright spot for young kids. It is the state's first dedicated funding source for this vulnerable population.

In 2006 Arizonans had the vision to dedicate tobacco tax dollars to invest in our children's critical first years of life. The money we devote to early care and education is our community's most strategic investment: Every dollar spent on early care and learning for our youngest residents pays a return of \$16. That's money saved in decreasing costs for remedial and special education, juvenile corrections and physical and mental health programs.

We've come a long way in understanding the developmental lessons of birth to five, and Arizona must not step away from the commitment to our youngest children. Whether entire generations become productive members of society can depend on the types of programs First Things First supports.



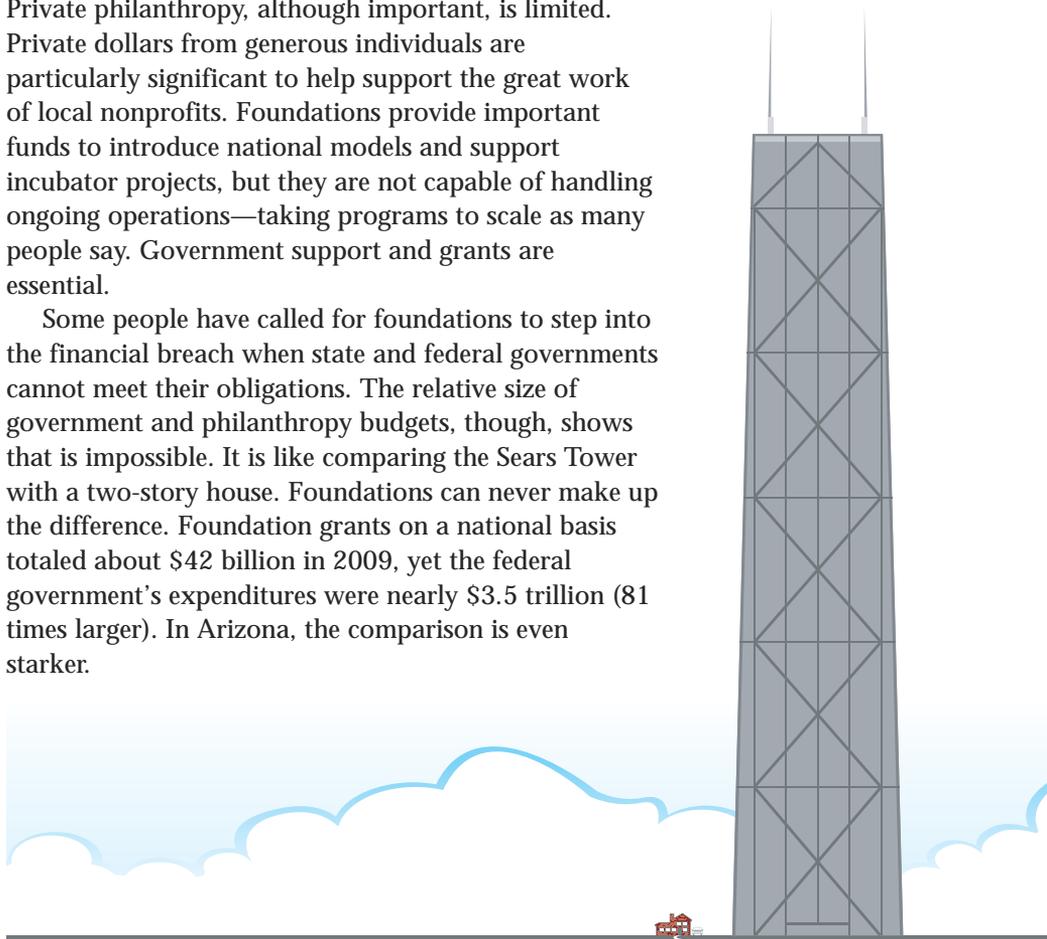
Piper Trust piloted a program with 20 Catholic preschools to evaluate how curricula can be improved and physical learning environments enhanced.



***Can't Piper Trust and other private foundations cover this investment for the state?***

Private philanthropy, although important, is limited. Private dollars from generous individuals are particularly significant to help support the great work of local nonprofits. Foundations provide important funds to introduce national models and support incubator projects, but they are not capable of handling ongoing operations—taking programs to scale as many people say. Government support and grants are essential.

Some people have called for foundations to step into the financial breach when state and federal governments cannot meet their obligations. The relative size of government and philanthropy budgets, though, shows that is impossible. It is like comparing the Sears Tower with a two-story house. Foundations can never make up the difference. Foundation grants on a national basis totaled about \$42 billion in 2009, yet the federal government's expenditures were nearly \$3.5 trillion (81 times larger). In Arizona, the comparison is even starker.





Funding to build neonatal intensive care units like this one at Banner Desert Medical Center in Mesa helped increase the number of beds for little patients by over 100.

### Piper Trust Goals

Increased parental effectiveness

Quality preschool and childcare

Improved healthcare facilities and services for young children

### ***What is the future of Piper Trust's investment in early childhood?***

We will continue to invest in programs for children 0 to 5. Our approach is a three-legged stool: first, programs for parents to increase parental effectiveness; second, programs for caregivers to improve the quality of preschool and child care; and,

third, programs to enhance healthcare facilities and services for young children.

The Piper Trust also will continue to be part of the dialogue as the state shapes its future.

### ***What must we do as community members and a state?***

Even knowing the phenomenal return on investment, we still struggle as a state to provide the comprehensive early care and education services necessary.

Our future as a state depends on what we do for our youngest—how we care for them physically and emotionally and how we help them learn the fundamentals—because that's where the greatest dividends come.

Public investment is absolutely necessary, and First Things First is a ready vehicle to convey the services required. It is difficult for policymakers and administrators to understand that investing in early childhood takes patience to get the traction we need to slow the long-standing unhealthy trends.

We're not good at investing and biding our time, but we must—or the bill that comes due will be a great deal more costly in the future. \*

## **VIRGINIA G. PIPER CHARITABLE TRUST**

Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust is a private, independent foundation committed to honoring Virginia Galvin Piper's legacy of supporting organizations whose work enhances the lives of people in Maricopa County, Arizona. By investing in nonprofits and encouraging strategic planning for the future, Piper Trust strives to make Greater Phoenix a stronger, more nurturing and vibrant community. Piper Trust focuses grantmaking on



healthcare and medical research, children, older adults, arts and culture, education and religious organizations.

As a place-based philanthropy concentrating on one geographic area, Piper Trust works to be more than a grantmaker. The Trust convenes groups to address community issues, brings national thought leaders to meet with nonprofit executives, and fosters collaboration in the philanthropic sector. Piper Trust introduced the Piper Fellows program in 2001 to enable nonprofit leaders to take sabbaticals for renewal and professional development.

Piper Trust has invested more than \$255 million in nonprofits and programs. \*



From left: Paul Critchfield, José Cárdenas, Sharon Harper (seated), Laura Grafman, James Bruner, Arthur DeCabooter, Stephen Zabilski

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