

# *Notes from the Field*

JESSIE BALL  
DU PONT  
F U N D



*At Work In Florida*

No. 10 – FALL 2003



Investing in organizations  
and communities that were  
important to Mrs. duPont.

*Acknowledgements-* We wish to acknowledge and thank  
Tracy Constantine for writing this issue of Notes from the Field,  
and Mary Kress Littlepage for her editorial oversight.  
We are indebted to them.

*About the cover-* A digital painting of children in the  
Bonita Springs area, based on a photograph from the  
Florida Community Loan Fund (see page 7).  
Painting by Glenn Ivie.

*Notes from the Field*

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# Introduction

In 2002, as the Jessie Ball duPont Fund entered its 25th year of grantmaking, the trustees of the Fund asked staff to help them take a step back and reflect on the cumulative effects of our past grants. Specifically, they challenged us to ask whether the Fund's investments had made a difference for our eligible organizations and their partners - and for the communities in which those organizations operate.

Our staff always had tracked grants in broad, general categories, such as higher education, health, religion, and cultural programs. But we began to explore the trustees' question further by identifying and naming the actual outcomes and accomplishments of our past grants, intended or not. We recognized that our investments during the first 25 years had enabled eligible organizations and their partners to strengthen the independent sector; organize and nurture philanthropy; build assets of people, families, and communities; build the capacity of the eligible organizations; stimulate community problem solving; and help people hold their communities accountable.

STRENGTHENING THE INDEPENDENT SECTOR  
ORGANIZING AND NURTURING PHILANTHROPY  
BUILDING ASSETS OF PEOPLE, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITIES  
BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF THE ELIGIBLE ORGANIZATIONS  
STIMULATING COMMUNITY PROBLEM SOLVING  
HELPING PEOPLE HOLD THEIR COMMUNITIES ACCOUNTABLE



In effect, the review process caused us to shift the way we talked about our grants from noun-based categories (health, religion, culture, education) to verb- or action-based categories (strengthen, organize, nurture, build, stimulate, and help). Grantees from different "areas" or "categories" - as previously defined - were actually accomplishing similar outcomes when viewed from this new perspective. And, from our vantage point, the kinds of outcomes many of our eligible organizations were achieving were - and are - necessary to foster healthy and just democratic

societies, particularly in the current climate of political and economic uncertainty.

In addition to shifting the way we understand the work of our grantees and eligible organizations, this period of introspection prompted our trustees and staff to shift the way we understand our own work. We believe the Fund – and organized philanthropy as a whole – has the ability and obligation to promote a general spirit of giving; to be an advocate for vulnerable populations who, historically, have been the ultimate recipients of our support; and to be the best partner we can be to the nonprofit organizations that we invest in by ensuring that they are financially sound and responsibly governed.

More specifically, we have the responsibility to invest in people and organizations that are working across race, class, and economic lines to respond to complex and growing community problems. Indeed, we are being called upon to step up to that responsibility, as state budget crises and devolution leave local nonprofit organizations bearing the brunt of delivering social services and building healthy communities.

The duPont Fund has recommitted itself to helping grantees work more effectively to address social concerns and to increase community investments. We believe modest investments can give nonprofit organizations the time and resources to navigate the turbulent demands and changes that increasingly confront them.

We also have made a commitment to focus on the communities where the Fund has a critical mass of eligible organizations. Such a focus can leverage both our investments and the talents and resources of those organizations by encouraging increased communication and collaboration. We believe that by coordinating and sharing information about their efforts, our eligible organizations and their partners can address more deeply, systematically, and effectively the needs of the citizens in their communities.

One such area of concentration for the duPont Fund is the state of Florida, which is home to a third of the Fund's 331 eligible organizations.

Florida is a relative newcomer to the nonprofit and philanthropic arenas. There is no major foundation that funds throughout the state; existing foundations focus on specific institutions or localities. Like its philanthropic infrastructure, politics, policy, and social structure in Florida have long been considered “fragmented.” The state has traditionally operated on what political scientist V.O. Key, Jr., called, in his 1949 seminal work *Southern Politics*, an ethic of “every man for himself.” Citing 1940

Census data, Key observed that:

*[a]lmost half of Florida's people were born in other states; half the people have no roots in the state or perhaps are in the process of putting down roots. The consequence may be what the sociologist calls a relatively uncrystallized [sic] social structure. Individual status is perhaps less fixed by family connections and by community accordance than in an old society that projects its structure through generation after generation. In politics loyalties have not been built up, traditional habits of action with respect to local personages, leaders, parties, and issues have not been acquired. Social structure, to use a phrase of perhaps ambiguous meaning, has not taken on definite form in the sense of well-recognized and obeyed centers of political leadership and of power. Flux, fluidity, uncertainty in human relations are the rule. (Key 86)*

Key's 1940s assessment remains relevant in 2003. Extreme population growth (more than 800 new residents arrive in Florida every day)<sup>1</sup> and the diversity of the citizenry<sup>2</sup> continues to contribute to a fragmented state identity and fragmented priorities. Alan Stonecipher, writing for the St. Petersburg Times in April 2003, asserts:

*Florida in 2003 is moving backward, surpassed by its Southern neighbors and sinking to the bottom nationally in rankings on crime, education, the condition of children, access to medical care and tax fairness. We invest too little in education and achieve mediocre education outcomes. We suffer from high crime rates and a poor record in caring for our children. We hang on to a regressive tax system that is outmoded and inadequate to both the current and future demands of this fast-growing state.*

Stonecipher, a public policy consultant and former public information officer for the Florida Board of Regents, cites recent data that name the state of Florida:

- *1st in the percentage of population 65 and older*
- *51st in the percentage of population 18-64*
- *49th in population under 18*
- *1st in violent crime per 100,000 population*
- *6th in per capita state and local government expenditures for police protection*
- *6th in per capita state and local government expenditures for corrections*
- *48th in per capita state and local expenditures for higher education*

- *46th-worst among the states and the District of Columbia in adequacy of school funding, lower than every Southern state except Mississippi and Tennessee*
- *Tied for 45th in average class size for self-contained classes in elementary schools*
- *51st in high school graduation rates*
- *36th in the percentage of parents classified as “the working poor”*
- *36th in the percentage of children in poverty*
- *43rd in the percentage of the population covered by health insurance*
- *One of 11 states ranked lowest in adequacy of revenue from its tax system*
- *One of six worst states in fairness to taxpayers*

These rankings reflect pressing community needs – as well as the inadequacy of current policies and funding structures to provide for all people who live in Florida, a state that has the fifth highest concentration of millionaires in the nation.<sup>3</sup>

As Florida and other states in the American South embark on a future that will be marked by increasing economic insecurity and changing demographics, we will need to broaden the conversation beyond taxation – and look beyond private giving and organized philanthropy to make up the shortfall. We must address the fundamental questions: Who do we want to be? What do we want to stand for? And how are we going to support that vision?

So what is the Jessie Ball duPont Fund doing to bring these fundamental questions to the forefront in the hopes of making the state in which we and so many of our eligible organizations operate a stronger place? As part of our new initiative to focus on communities, or “place,” the Fund has begun to work more strategically in Florida. We have identified philanthropic, nonprofit, and governmental partners who share our commitment to the six focus areas listed earlier. In addition, many of these partners have taken on an advocacy role for vulnerable populations in the state through communicating with the broad public; they have taken significant risks in the political arena by advocating with public policy makers directly to protect a wide range of Florida’s citizens. Finally, these partners have themselves demonstrated the value and effectiveness of coalition-building, working in collaboration with others to leverage resources and ideas.

In this, our tenth issue of Notes from the Field, we focus on four Florida projects and partnerships that we think embody

foundational ideals and principles of a healthy democratic society and the spirit of philanthropy that has historically strengthened our neighborhoods, communities, and country:

❖ **The Florida Community Loan Fund**, a relatively new organization, started with the research, moral passion, and retirement savings of a group of Catholic nuns who wanted to do something real to address poverty in the state. The Loan Fund, which loaned more than \$12 million dollars to leverage more than \$57 million worth of projects since its inception in 1994, uses a model that has been successful in other parts of the country to make housing and economic development funds - as well as valuable technical assistance and financial guidance - available to nonprofit organizations that would have difficulty securing financing through conventional lenders.

❖ **The Nonprofit Center of Northeast Florida**, formed in 2002 to serve as a support and resource center for local nonprofit organizations, has proven its weight in gold in its first year. The organization successfully initiated and helped draft state legislation to make workers' compensation insurance more affordable for nonprofit organizations - a process that will help prevent a number of nonprofits from having to close their doors.

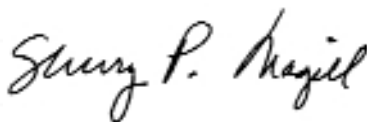
❖ **The Juvenile Justice Initiative**, a collaboration between Child Welfare League of America, Florida Children's Campaign, Inc., and a group of nonprofits that serve at-risk youth in Florida, is using public opinion polls and mass media outlets to engage in advocacy and to educate state legislators about the need to protect the funding base for juvenile justice programs in Florida. The group has been an effective voice for two legislative sessions, resulting in a restoration of funding for many programs that support at-risk youth in Florida.

❖ **The Florida Philanthropic Network**, a group of foundation leaders from across the state, recognizing the need for more research on state social concerns, seeks to establish credibility for the independent sector in state policy discussions and thereby to influence effective responses to the unique challenges facing Florida and its residents.

We have not undertaken this work lightly. Our investments reflect insights gained from listening to and working with eligible organizations and their partners for more than 25 years and a deep respect for the capacity, inventiveness, and creativity of our eligible organizations.

Furthermore, our investments reflect insights gained from real data - research we have conducted and solicited to inform our decision making and mobilize additional partners. One such example is a report by the Washington, DC-based Urban Institute that was commissioned by the Florida Philanthropic Network, an organization the duPont Fund and other Florida-based foundations created. The report, "The Disposition of Federal Dollars in Florida's Social Services: Informing a Federal Funding Maximization Strategy," suggests that continued economic uncertainty could lead to more cuts in state funding of social services, and that such cuts could decrease the economic stability of more residents. In addition to questioning its current tax philosophy, Florida, the report makes clear, must maximize its ability to tap into federal funding programs that support the poor; it is missing opportunities because of agencies' and organizations' lack of proficiency in pursuing these funds.

Organized philanthropy and individual private donors are increasingly being called upon to fill in where public funding falls short. But where there is no public funding, there is no public responsibility for policy priorities and outcomes. The Fund believes that by investing in projects such as those featured in this publication we can support those women and men who are laying the groundwork for change - who are working to hold their communities accountable for the public good.



Sherry P. Magill Ph.D.  
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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census estimates, July 1, 2001 to July 1, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census, 2000, shows Florida exceeds the nation in the percent of population that is African American (14.6 % in Florida, 12.3 % nationwide), that is Hispanic (16.8 % vs. 12.5 %), that is foreign-born (16.7 % vs. 11.1 %) and that speaks a language other than English in the home (23.1 % vs. 17.9 %).

<sup>3</sup> *The Disposition of Federal Dollars in Florida's Social Services: Informing a Federal Funding Maximization Strategy*; Adam Carasso and Roseanna Bess, The Urban Institute, June 2003.