



Taking a Deeper Look

Charlottesville Area Community Foundation
Annual Lunch
June 6, 2018
Brennan Gould, Director of Programs

Good afternoon Friends,

It is my absolute pleasure to be here with you today.

Typically, at this event, we report to you an update on the array of important programs and activities made possible by our donors over many years – programs that are hugely important and that add to the quality of life in the region. These programs are an essential part of what the Foundation does and will continue doing in the future.

But this was not a typical year in our community. This year our community faced challenges that became a national focus – and your Community Foundation found itself uniquely positioned to assume a leadership role in partnership with others in ways we had never been called on to do before. This is the story I want to share with you today.

At last year's Annual Lunch in late March we were joyously celebrating our 50th anniversary as a philanthropic institution in the region. We shared a video that chronicled our history, our tradition of giving, and our evolving work to improve quality of life in the Charlottesville area. We were excited by the forward momentum of our team, our grantmaking, and the impact our partners were having on the lives of others. For most of us, we couldn't imagine the tragedy we'd soon experience.

August 11th and 12th of last year were painful and horrifying days for our community. We saw violence, terror, and the loss of three lives: Heather Heyer, Lt. H. Jay Cullen and Trooper Berke Bates.

For the Foundation, the ground shifted beneath us and what we thought we saw or knew or understood about our community changed. In many ways, nothing new was before us, but the fissures exposed old structures in ways we hadn't seen them before. Not only that, but as an institution, interconnected with our surroundings and history of place and time, we had an important opportunity to take a deeper look at ourselves, our work, and our way forward.

In the initial phase of responding to the crisis of last August, we learned a lot. Through our work with survivors of the car attack, we saw the resilience of so many who endured multiple surgeries and a complete disruption, and in some cases permanent change, to their lives. These are our neighbors who are now living with lifelong scars, chronic pain, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Ten months later,

many don't know what their future will be. I visited a friend who was in one of the cars that was rammed on 4th street. She suffered an injury resulting in lifelong and excruciating pain. She experiences flashbacks, anxiety, and depression. She also is grieving the loss of a career as a paramedic. She proudly passed her EMT exam, despite her physical pain, a week after the car attack only to learn that she could not pursue the job opportunity lined up for her because of her injuries. While she is receiving support for living expenses through the funds available to survivors, she is navigating a tough new world of doctor's appointments, paperwork, a few good days and many more bad days of pain, trying to be a mom—all while fighting to stay strong and not feel like a burden to her family. And as the one year anniversary approaches and the trial is scheduled for November, she experiences new waves of fear, uncertainty, and emotion. She is exceptionally strong and surviving in an exceptional way, but like many directly touched by the violence of that day, she carries deep, invisible wounds. There are survivors and families of survivors here today. I want to acknowledge you, your unique pain and loss, and your resilience to continue taking each day as it comes.

In the wake of August 11th and 12th, the Foundation received many generous donations originating from our region and across the nation – individuals gave, businesses, private and corporate foundations. Go Fund Me pages, local business fundraisers, merchandise sales, and nonprofit events raised funds for survivors of the car attack. Dave Matthews Band and other performers held a concert that resulted in considerable funding. This incredible display of generosity, over \$1.5 million that was housed at the Foundation through the Heal, Concert for Charlottesville and Unity Cville funds, was the largest opportunity in our community to respond to and heal from the terrorism and tragedy we collectively experienced.

Our immediate priority was to ensure that survivors of the car attack had what they needed to recover. In partnership with the Pathways Program at The Haven, we have been directing funds to support survivors by covering living expenses, meeting recovery needs and helping each individual find a way forward. This support has been complementary to the many other sources of financial and emotional support provided by other fundraisers, the faith and activist communities, and nonprofit providers. Through our work with survivors, we learned that dollars weren't all that was needed. Some of the funds are supporting a dedicated navigator at Partner for Mental Health who is helping our friends transition during their time of healing to the next chapter of their lives, whatever that might look like for them. For some, it means new work skills to accommodate a change in physical ability, and for others it means transitioning to longer forms of assistance. There are some of you here today who have been working tirelessly with us and with survivors to ensure they have what they need during this recovery period. I want to thank you and say it is an honor to be serving with you in this way.

Also in the wake of August 11th and 12th, our whole community was hurting. As part of the rapid response work, we made grants to support organizations serving both youth and adults who were coping with the tragedy, and to first responders who had cared for people during the violence.

We also learned that while our whole community was hurting, our hurt was not the same. Just as happens in any family, each member experiences and feels things differently even if they are all present for the same event. The hurt across our community was experienced differently. The shock of the violence, the feelings of vulnerability and the disruption of a certain sense of “normal” shook many community members. Some couldn’t believe that this had happened and their hurt was rooted in the reality that their world had been turned upside down and the future was uncertain. For others, the hurt was a deep trauma that is triggered by images of tiki-torch lit rallies, Klansmen in hoods and a persistent feeling of being The Other. These community members were deeply impacted and troubled by the events of last summer, but they were not surprised by them. Some community members felt invisible, and some felt helpless, many felt outrage. It has become clear to us at the Foundation that we have to “see” our community differently—for the many populations that we are. The notion of a universal experience of community doesn’t work. In order to truly empathize and move forward together, we have to be willing to acknowledge that due to historical and structural contexts, people experience our community differently. We can’t overlook that fact.

We also can’t overlook the reality that our community doesn’t work the same way for everyone. Individual acts of bigotry and expressions of hatred are deeply troubling and we have to denounce those, but individual acts of racism and Anti-Semitism are not the sum of the marginalization experienced by people in our community. There remain structural, longstanding, silent mechanisms of exclusion that have been baked into our society and institutions from their beginnings. There are persistent racial disparities in health, education, policing and incarceration, economic opportunity, mobility, and wealth-building. Deeper, more structural causes are the reason that significant disparities persist. It was important for the Foundation—in our response to what we were hearing that the community felt it needed for healing-- that part of the response work include directing funds to address the structures of exclusion. We made targeted grants to support the Jewish community. We also held a grant round that focused on three areas of work to address the inequities faced by people of color. These areas of work included: increasing diversity and inclusion in community decision-making processes, advancing racial equity in a number of outcome areas, and increasing education of structural racism, its impacts and the telling of our collective history.

It was also important to us that we thought carefully about making this opportunity as accessible as possible. To help us understand how best to do that, we spent time relationship-building and listening to people who had never applied to the Foundation. Ultimately, we received proposals from both organizations and individuals, something that was entirely new for us. We set the award size at a range that was manageable by both grassroots and large initiatives. We released our guidelines in English and Spanish and we announced them through traditional and targeted channels. We also partnered with the Center for Nonprofit Excellence to provide grant-writing help, and we received applications handwritten or typed, hand delivered or sent through mail or email. And we engaged a fantastic group of community leaders to advise us on funding decisions.

The results were encouraging. We received over 100 applications requesting nearly \$3 million in support. People of all ages applied. Half were from initiatives led by people of color and more than half were from organizations who had never applied to the Foundation before. Greater accessibility, we achieved. We learned that many of these initiatives were not new and they did not just come about after last August. Most of the initiatives had been happening all along and were just not on our radar at the Community Foundation. These initiatives were seeking support to advance and promote small businesses, help returning citizens overcome insurmountable and exclusionary barriers, and tell aspects of our collective history that have been omitted. All of the initiatives, regardless of the race of those leading them, had this in common: a genuine desire to take a deeper look at the way our community is and isn't working for everyone.

Race is a hard topic. It's difficult to talk about. It's hard to know what to say and when and to whom. It's nearly impossible to understand another's experience. And it's hard to know how to show compassion and empathy in ways that build up and encourage and that communicate exactly what you want to communicate. Race is absolutely a social construct, but it also has a real effect on people's lives. Race is a very difficult topic. But that is not a reason to avoid it. Which is why the response to the grant round was so moving. We saw that there is an undeniable desire in our community to make it a better place for everyone. That's what we saw by the response. And we should all be encouraged by that.

In the coming weeks, \$900,000 will flow from the Heal and Concert for Charlottesville funds to more than 40 community initiatives. We just learned that an anonymous donor has provided an additional \$100,000 to advance the work of the grant partners. That's \$1 million to help our community move forward. The initiatives will be led by community members of all colors and ages, targeted to specific populations, and focused on making our community more inclusive and a place where we all belong.

While the events of last summer have caused us to look at ourselves and community differently, we have remained committed to our work with donors and nonprofits. The Foundation has been reflecting on our existing approach across all of our work and making changes to serve you better. We have launched a donor education series to offer more opportunities for fund holders and donors to meet one another and learn about causes they care about. This fall, fund holders and donors will be able to review and respond to grant applications received through our programs, joining us in increasing the amount of funding flowing to the community, and building greater connections between philanthropically-minded individuals and businesses and the organizations working to make a difference in the region. We have also enhanced our resources for nonprofits and will be deepening our partnerships and celebrating partner impact. We are extremely excited by this work before us.

At the Foundation, we are on a journey and we are exploring what our role can be as we serve this community. We take seriously this important opportunity to reflect on ourselves as an institution, one that is situated in a particular position in our region. We are a grantmaker, a steward of generous



giving, and an advisor to other philanthropists. We are a partner to many community-based initiatives. We have a mission to improve quality of life in the region and we believe that to mean *all* people in our region. I do not stand before you with answers as to exactly what this will mean for the Foundation, but we are committed to our journey of self-reflection and to exploring how our work responding to the tragic events of last summer can inform our work going forward. We are committed to taking a deeper look.

I hope you would agree that as is often the case in difficult times, your community foundation matured a bit this year. We were in a position to step up when our community needed us and we do not take lightly that leadership role and the responsibilities associated with it. We do know that we were prepared to take on this role because of so many of you in this room today—our longstanding supporters and friends—who have built the Foundation over the years and who have made it possible for us to step in at times like this. We thank you for your confidence in us.

I want to close by saying, thank you, to everyone for being here today. Thank you for being a part of a community that is striving to transform our region in positive ways—through your giving, through your tireless work, and through your leadership. It is an honor to be your community foundation and we look forward to continuing our journey with all of you in the years ahead.