

# Marlene Young Shares Thoughts Regarding Foundations, Their Joys and Challenges



*Marlene Young stands in front of Brodbeck Music Hall on the Hood College campus.*

## ***What aspect of grantmaking has changed the most since Delaplaine Foundation began awarding grants?***

Automation of the grantmaking process has clearly been the aspect of greatest change since Delaplaine Foundation opened its doors in 2001 and made its first grants in 2002. In the early years, it was not unusual to receive handwritten applications and have them mailed or walked into our office at deadline - or after! Automation of the process has evolved significantly, moving from primarily manual and paper-based systems to digital platforms with integrated features. This evolution has been driven by the implementation of our automated online grants management system Foundant Technologies that we transitioned to in 2010. I met Foundant's co-founder Daren Nordhagen at a conference in Washington, D.C. and was able to spend an afternoon with him articulating our specific needs so that he was willing to follow up with presenting a customized proposal based on our needs. The end result was a user-friendly software application that that eventually morphed into an all-in-one

solution product called Grant Lifecycle Manager/ GLM that provides a centralized platform for managing all aspects of the grant life cycle, from application review to reporting and monitoring. With unlimited user access from anywhere, applicants, staff, Board members, grant reviewers are ensured ease of flexibility and access and the ability to view historical funding decisions and impact. Technology has enabled us to be not only more efficient, but allows us to chart, analyze and better measure the success of program outcomes as they align with our mission and the Foundation's strategic plan, ultimately benefiting both the Foundation as a philanthropic funder and our grantees as partners in impact.

## ***What has been one of the greatest joys of working for a family foundation?***

One of the greatest joys has been knowing I am part of something so much bigger than myself, and having been entrusted with the honor and privilege to lead this Foundation. It has given me great joy and fulfillment to put philanthropy into action alongside an

outstanding, dedicated staff and Board as we execute our mission to be a catalyst for positive change, impacting and empowering the lives of others to join in a shared vision for enriching communities, families and individuals - those whom we serve and support through grant funding support of our nonprofit partners. It's been a great joy to see how individual members of the Board, particular the younger members, come into their own identity and realization of the power of philanthropy as they are able to advance causes and programs that are important to them personally with discretionary grant resources.

For me it has been a sacred trust to be a torchbearer of the proud legacy of the Delaplaine Family that dates back to the late 1800s – a legacy of unceasing service to others, and enrichment of community. It's a point of pride to know that Delaplaine Foundation, Inc. has poured back over \$30M into the communities we serve since opening our doors. There is a special joy that comes from knowing you've been part of helping to impact and improve the lives

and wellbeing of others, most of whom you do not know or will likely ever meet - the joy rooted in planting seeds of hope and empowerment that yield a bountiful harvest through philanthropy “for a greater good.”

***Looking back at the past two decades, what was the most challenging situation you encountered?***

Without doubt, the most challenging situation encountered was began in March, 2020 when the full force of Covid-19 descended upon the nation and the local Frederick County community. We never could have anticipated the abrupt disruption and hardships so many in our communities would experience as a result of the pandemic that introduced us to new conditions and caused the words “unprecedented”, “pivot”, “social distancing” and others to become part of our daily conversations. A short time later, then Gov. Larry Hogan would declare by executive order the closing of all businesses that were defined as “non-essential”, which included private foundations. Yet we knew that with so many businesses and organizations being forced to shutter and the loss of jobs and services as a result, the urgency to sustain and supply basic human needs would be accelerated for many families and individuals, particularly the most vulnerable who under the best of circumstances have a difficult time making ends meet.

From the onset, Delaplaine Foundation understood the urgency of the situation and we, along with other local philanthropic funders acted on that urgency to form an alignment called the COVID-19 Collaborative. Collectively, we channeled our resources, energies and philanthropic dollars to become a targeted force for meeting community needs. We monitored and assessed community needs and available resources in order to connect need with supply. We opened a common portal through The Community Foundation of Frederick County website where non-profits were encouraged to submit applications for emergency grants funding, while the participating funders were given open access to see all the applications submitted so that we could regularly communicate by conference call or virtual meetings to



*Marlene Young with Josh Pedersen, former CEO of the United Way of Frederick County.*

determine who would take which grant so that we could help channel grant funding and supplies to help our local nonprofits keep their doors open and to meet urgent, critical community needs. Meanwhile, I was keeping in regular contact with fellow members of the Executive Committee of the Delaplaine Foundation Board of Trustees to relay my recommendations on which grants we should cover. From March thru July of 2020, from my home, I wrote 70 emergency grants as approved by the Executive Committee of the Board amounting to \$539,000. I prepared the checks and mailed them out, making weekly, discreet visits to the office to drop off grant award documents and pick up additional checks and supplies. The COVID-19 Collaborative collectively provided \$1,726,000 in emergency grant funding during that time. In addition to the 70 emergency grants written, Delaplaine Foundation later wrote an additional 143 grants in the Fall of 2020 for a total of 223 grants in that “unprecedented” year, proving once again that even in the midst of the most unpredictable circumstances, Frederick County continued to care for its own.

***What is something that few people know about you?***

I’m not sure that a lot of people are aware of the profound impact music has had on my life. My passion for music and its ability to stir the spirit and soul go back as far as I can remember. As a child, I grew up in a rural Frederick County where music was a big part of our home life. A major source of entertainment and enrichment for me was a beautiful old upright piano that was played by my mother, my sister, and me. I spent countless hours there singing and playing, later taking formal piano lessons during middle and high school years. I recall a poster in my room growing up with the message “For heights and depths that words can’t reach, music is the soul’s own speech.” That really spoke to me. After being selected for All-County and All-State Music Chorus during my junior and senior years at Middletown High school, studying voice, and singing in a family trio in many of the churches of Frederick County over the years, I initially started out as a music major in college before shifting to business, but I have continued my passion for music in every season of my life through singing, playing piano, directing church choirs for over 40 years and having the joy of recording seven vocal albums of original songs I’ve written and original

arrangements of timeless classics of faith and inspiration as well as Christmas and holiday favorites. My original song “Christmas in Our Hometown” was played each holiday season on local radio stations, and I’ve sung it at the Weinberg Center and in the closing program following the Kris Kringle Procession.

For me, it’s been a joy to pursue “service through song” by blending the passions of my professional work in support of the missions of nonprofit community with my music in that since the release of my first CD album in 2002 and with each subsequent release since, I have donated 100% of the proceeds from the sales of my albums to local nonprofit organizations, including the United Way of Frederick County, Mission of Mercy, Beyond Shelter Frederick (formerly Religious Coalition for Emergency Human Needs), the Women’s Giving Circle of Frederick County, etc. It’s been so rewarding that the songs of my heart have been appreciated by others and as a result, I’ve been able to further support community nonprofits, something that truly makes my heart sing!

***Over time at Delaplaine Foundation, what interesting famous person have you met, and why were they interesting?***

In truth, there have been many famous people I’ve been fortunate to meet and have the opportunity to talk with and learn from including Tom Brokaw, William Shatner, General Stanley McChrystal, LaVar Burton,



*Marlene Young with the late General Colin Powell.*

Steve Harvey, Bob Woodward, Henry Winkler, Hoda Kobb, Sam Donaldson, Chris Wallace, Shannon Bream, Mitch Albom, Dr. Ben Carson, Jon Meachum, Dr. Mehmet Oz, Dr. Temple Grandin, Ted Koppel to name just some of them. Some have been through professional conferences attended over the years and more recently, the Frederick Speaker Series. However, for me, the most interesting famous person was the late, great Secretary of State General Colin Powell whom I was fortunate to first meet at a conference years ago and got to speak with privately for about 20 minutes during a reception and prior to his keynote address. What struck me immediately was his genuine humility and authenticity. Of course, I had known he was a man of great stature, exceptional talent, leadership, a highly decorated military officer with a strong sense of duty and patriotism, who had risen through the ranks to become the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff where he was known for his strategic thinking and ability to manage crisis situations such as Operation Desert Storm, and who later would serve as the 65th United States Secretary of State under President George W. Bush. What I found particularly interesting in talking with him was learning more of his life’s story in coming from very humble beginnings (as did I), being committed to working hard, always standing on unwavering principles and fully dedicated in service to God and country. He told me that he never thought he’d be more than an Army soldier. I was really taken by his genuine belief that through hard work and perseverance, you can achieve great things. These attributes made him a role model and inspiration to so many people, particularly young African Americans as his life was a testimony to what hard work, perseverance and dedication can yield. He was a strong advocate for diplomacy and peaceful conflict resolution. Yet despite his demanding career, he always made time for his family, and after transitioning from military to civilian life he and his wife Alma devoted their lives to the nonprofit he founded and for which he served as Founding Chair, America’s Promise. That organization focused on ending the high school dropout crisis by improving the lives of youth. His passion for leading and service in a nonprofit really resonated with me personally and professionally.



*Marlene Young at the 2022 Delaplaine Arts Center annual Gala, with a piece she created that was auctioned to benefit the Center.*

***What personal characteristic(s) have served you best as President of Delaplaine Foundation?***

I would say it’s a combination of a consistent and passionate pursuit of excellence, an unquenchable thirst for lifelong learning, being an intent listener and problem solver, coupled with a genuine desire to lead and serve with a lifelong desire to make a lasting, positive difference through my professional as well as personal endeavors.

***What would you like nonprofit organizations to know about Delaplaine Foundation?***

Our work isn’t just organizational – it’s deeply human and based on guiding values and principles first evidenced by generations of the Delaplaine family gone on before us that are deeply ingrained and consistently exhibited through the life of our Co-Founder and Chairman George Delaplaine. It is what frames our mission of service to community support and enrichment, genuine caring and compassion that seeks to alleviate human hardship, and a profound and abiding love for Frederick County. Our roots run deep here and we are committed to a deep-seated, place-based philanthropy that serves and supports beyond a grant check.



Marlene receives an Executive Citation from Larry Unger, former President and CEO of Maryland Public Television, in 2025.

We are here to partner with our community nonprofit partners and fellow philanthropic partners, to listen, learn, connect and collaborate for a greater community good.

**What would you say to someone who wants to lead a family foundation?**

A family foundation provides a structured framework for individual family members to establish and/or build upon an enduring legacy by identifying and supporting causes that they care about through an organization of shared purpose that creates lasting impact. First, recognize that while every family is different, all families have certain common denominators. Things like connections that tie them together, shared values, beliefs and traditions that help shape identity, a sense of belonging and heritage, while at the same time, individual family members may have very diverse interests and causes that are important to them. Remember that family dynamics can be challenging at times, yet even if conflict should arise, there are more things that unite than divide and family members are mostly interested and eager to resolve any misunderstandings to prevent communication breakdowns in

the desire to maintain family harmony and focus on the good of the family foundation. This is where having a consistent Board governance in place will help navigate and keep on track meeting the family foundation mission and regulatory complexities by keeping in compliance with IRS reporting requirements, excise taxes and payout requirements.

Above all, recognize that to be in service to humanity is a high calling. It's important to keep a high community profile and to build a network within the nonprofit community. Get to know the mission of each nonprofit, the current players, and community needs. Be sure to listen and learn from those who are at the helm of community leadership and those rendering services for community needs. Be intentional about relationship building with each member of the Board, each staff member, each nonprofit leader so that you are not only learning more about them as individuals with strengths and abilities, but you are increasing trust levels, and in the process discovering new ways to better support the work they do to enrich those whom they serve and the communities being supported.

Remember, it's not about merely writing checks and making a donation, it's about making a difference, hopefully one that is lasting and with broad impact for the

causes, concerns, communities and lives that are involved. It's about meeting needs, listening, learning, then acting to turn problems into opportunities for better outcomes, while fostering hope and building a brighter tomorrow.



Marlene Young is seen with a dress created by internationally-renowned designer Claire McCardell who is credited with originating women's sportswear. This dress is from Marlene's personal collection from which she donated 15 Claire McCardell originals to the Maryland Center for History and Culture in Baltimore, MD.



Marlene Young is a multiple recipient of the Maryland Top 100 Women citation. She is seen receiving the award on May 4, 2015 at the Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall in Baltimore. She was also named in 2020 and in 2022 at which time she was also inducted into the organization's Circle of Excellence.