

'She loves Frederick': Delaplaine Foundation President Marlene Young to retire in June

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Marlene Young is retiring next June as president and CEO of the Delaplaine Foundation.

To Marlene Young, her work at the Delaplaine Foundation has never felt like a job — rather, it's been a calling and a privilege.

She believes that it's a universal truth that people only get to keep what they give away. She's tried to integrate that philosophy into her personal life and her career at the foundation.

"I'm in a season where I've realized that for all of us, our days are numbered, so we need to use them to kind of open the windows of our souls and do what we can where we can to enrich the lives of others," she said. "What a joy and privilege it is when we do that."

Young has helped build the Delaplaine Foundation — a private family foundation based in Frederick that gives grants to hundreds of organizations — from the ground up since its inception in 2001.

After 23 years of shaping and leading the foundation first as director and later as president and CEO since 2012, Young will retire from her current roles next June.

She will continue serving on the foundation's Board of Trustees as its president.

The foundation has not yet announced her successor.

Prior to the creation of the Delaplaine Foundation, Young, an alumna of Hood College, was part of the Delaplaine family's Great Southern Printing and Manufacturing Company.

The company was created in 1888 and later published The Frederick News-Post and owned the cable company GS Communications. It sold its newspaper printing and cable divisions in 2001.

'Giving back'

Young began working at the Great Southern Printing and Manufacturing Company in 1974 in customer service.

She went on to hold several other roles, including being an administrative assistant to George Delaplaine Jr., the company's former president and CEO, and being director of human resources.

In 2001, after the company sold its media divisions, Young said, Delaplaine wanted to create something to keep the company's top management team together and still give back to the local community.

"We determined that to establish a private foundation, we could perpetuate the giving back to community that had been part of the businesses all through the years," she said.

"... Because I had been working so closely with George for all of those many years — 24 years in our for-profit businesses — he said to me, 'Well, why don't you take that ball and run with it?'"

Young said that because of Delaplaine's trust in her, she had the autonomy to set up the infrastructure and organization of the private foundation.

Delaplaine, the foundation's chairman, could not be reached for comment on Tuesday.

In a news release announcing Young's retirement, he said her leadership has made the foundation "a true jewel of Frederick County."

"Her tireless leadership has resulted in the Foundation's growth and enormous philanthropic outreach, which have far surpassed our wildest expectations," Delaplaine said.

Since the foundation was created, it has awarded more than 2,300 grants — totaling over \$30 million — to more than 300 nonprofit organizations, according to Young.

In 2020, after former Gov. Larry Hogan ordered all non-essential businesses to close due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Young oversaw the foundation awarding 70 emergency grants in four months to sustain local nonprofits, according to the news release.

One achievement she's the most proud of is establishing the foundation's operational structure and governance.

She's also proud of relationships the foundation established with residents and local organizations, so the community is truly connected with the foundation.

Young spoke about the foundation's partnership with the software company Foundant Technologies, which has automated the foundation's grant application process and allows the foundation to chart performance metrics.

She said the Delaplaine Foundation was the first organization in Frederick County to partner with this company. Other focal foundations have also partnered with it since then.

"As a result of that, we have the ability through that software to track total community grant making so that we can identify where we have met community needs and also identify any gaps

in funding," she said.

Young is also proud of establishing the foundation's Community Advisory Council, which is made up of experts in each of the foundation's six focus areas.

Because of this council, she said, the Board of Trustees is better informed to make its funding decisions and has led to the foundation helping with some projects it may not have awarded otherwise.

Passion and action

David Gurzick, professor of management science and chair of the George B. Delaplaine Jr. School of Business at Hood College, described Young as a catalyst.

She not only starts something and infuses it with passion, but also backs up her goals and intentions with action, he said.

Gurzick is the director of Hood College's Michael S. and Marlene B. Grossnickle Young Data Driven Frederick Center, a data analytics center where students can conduct research and work with data as part of their coursework.

Gurzick said he came to work with Young through the creation of the Delaplaine Business School and Data Driven Frederick.

He said Young is a pillar of the community in Frederick and has an ability to motivate people to be involved, but also clearly communicate the direction she wants to pursue.

When he has met with Young about creating Data Driven Frederick, he'd frantically jot notes, trying to get down every word she said because they all felt important.

"So much of the creation of the center was really around Marlene making these tremendous connections to people that were instrumental in kind of framing the initial data sets that we were using, and putting us into connection with other movers and shakers," Gurzick said.

"... In any conversation, you can just tell she loves Frederick, and she loves the ability to support people in making an impact."

Passing the torch

Young said she's looking forward to spending more time with her husband, children and

grandchildren once she retires. She decided to retire now because it feels like the right time to pass her torch.

At the beginning of 2024, she said, the Board of Trustees met to talk about its succession plan and how to have a smooth transition.

She said she wants the foundation to prepare for the future and have new leadership come in and build off the organization's existing work and structure to take it "to even greater heights."

She said she's glad she'll still be serving on the Board of Trustees because she'll be able to support that new leadership and continue being part of the Delaplaine Foundation's future.

"I'm really excited for what is to come," Young said.
