

## COLUMN

# Quietly, foundation has made area better

In the business world, it's known as a soft opening. No advertising, just word-of-mouth recommendations to get people in the door.

That is the tack, whether intentional or not, of the Community Foundation of Tampa Bay, which expanded into Pasco County four years ago.

The what?

It's a natural question. Financial planners and probate lawyers, no doubt, are familiar with the foundation, as are some charity directors. So, too, we are guessing, are a few of the deep-pocketed individuals and families in the area.

The donor list includes Tampa Bay Buccaneers Derrick Brooks and Mike Alstott, Pasco residents and philanthropists Frank and Carol Morsani, Bob and Sharon Blanchard of the Little Everglades Ranch outside Dade City and the Rotary Club of Trinity. An upcoming private reception will honor J.B. and Marsha Starkey for a \$1-million donation for the Florida Orchestra.

The Community Foundation, in essence, is a clearinghouse for individuals to direct their charitable contributions. Though the foundation manages the money, the individual donor still steers it to their charity of choice. But it is different, then, say, the United Way, which spends its collections annually to assist social service groups but has to raise funds every year to repeat the cycle. The Community Foundation builds endowments to finance charity work in perpetuity. The principal remains intact.

Organizers describe it this way: United Way is the community's checking account; the Community Foundation is the savings account.

Those same organizers are now trying to get beyond the soft opening in Pasco to let the community at large know of the foun-



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dation's availability.

"It's been a well-kept secret," acknowledged Pasco Commissioner Ann Hildebrand, an ex officio member of the Pasco foundation's board.

One of her pet projects, the Good Samaritan Health Clinic, is one of the 73 charities that has partnered with the foundation to build endowments. Hernando-Pasco Hospice and Youth and Family Alternatives have done likewise as have other nonprofit groups that have services reaching into Pasco including Bay Area Legal Services, the Florida Aquarium, the Florida Orchestra, MOSI, Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center, SPCA, Scouts and some private schools.

The Community Foundation of Pasco County is chaired by west Pasco financial planner Keith Dunn. Its members include County Administrator John Gallagher, Saddlebrook owner Tom Dempsey, car dealer Tom Castriota, Realtors Dewey Mitchell and Allen Crumbley, Bob Blanchard, nearly a dozen lawyers, and social service agency directors George McGrill and Craig McCart.

For information, contact the foundation at (727) 846-1921, toll-free at 1-866-88PASCO, or visit its Web site at [www.cftampabay.com](http://www.cftampabay.com).

There is more to this, however, than just sticking money in the bank. The foundation's grants better the community. In Pasco, for instance, the foundation provides nursing scholarships at Pasco-Hernando Community College to build the pool of available

health care workers, and it partners with the Pasco County School District to help develop principal leadership skills.

Former St. Petersburg Mayor David Fischer is president and chief executive of the Community Foundation of Tampa Bay, which formed in 1990. Last year, it distributed \$8.5-million to charities from its \$100-million in assets. It sounds like a lot, until Fischer provides some perspective.

The foundation in Kalamazoo, Mich., a metropolitan area of 200,000 residents, has \$250-million in assets. The Tampa Bay area has 2.5-million residents and could easily have a philanthropic foundation worth more than \$1-billion sometime in the future, he said.

Community foundations aren't a new phenomenon. The first started in Cleveland in 1914, and the idea spread through the Midwest and East. The first foundation in Florida came in the 1960s. Today, there are 700 foundations across the country and 27 in Florida.

Certainly, there are tax advantages for the super wealthy to get involved. But organizers like to point out that those planning their estates can participate for as little as \$10,000.

The biggest individual fund within the foundation comes from Ray and Nancy Murray of Clearwater. They set up a \$6-million fund about nine years ago, then followed with a \$3-million endowment to finance evangelical work. Two of the four beneficiaries of that endowment are based in Pasco County — Trinity College and Word of Life in Shady Hills.

The Murrays were so pleased with the foundation's work, they encouraged their children to set up endowments, too.

"It's the best thing we've ever done," said Nancy Murray.

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