

# *The Jessie Ball duPont Fund*

## *Fellows Program: A 10-Year Retrospective*

**I**n 2007, the Jessie Ball duPont Fund launched its first Fellows Program, inviting two graduating college students to join the Fund for two years of work and study. The goal was to introduce young people at the beginning of their careers to philanthropy and the role of the independent sector in democratic communities in the hope that the lessons learned would inform their life's work.

Over the last 10 years, five classes of Fellows have been accepted and nine individuals have completed Jessie Ball duPont Fund Fellowships (one individual was unable to complete the program). Today, those nine individuals work and study in diverse fields, virtually all occupying jobs that seek to support the common good.

The Fellows all graduated from small liberal arts colleges supported by the Fund. During their Fellowship, they worked alongside the Fund's senior staff, collaborating on daily assignments and independently managing projects and programs. They participated in a number of specialized learning opportunities, including an in-house seminar series, the Georgetown University Nonprofit Management Executive Certificate program and professional gatherings of the field.

"We could not be more proud of these young professionals," said Sherry Magill, president of the Jessie Ball duPont Fund, "and it is fair to say that they taught us as much as we taught them. They broadened our perspectives and enriched our understanding of the people and communities that we serve."

Bringing young, inexperienced staff into a relatively small team of seasoned professionals provided the Fellows an intimate look at the workings of a robust philanthropic organization and its grantees. To a person, the Fellows talk about the benefits of watching the president or senior program officers interact with community leaders, respond in times of crisis or wrestle with the challenges of the job.

But the experience had equal benefits for the Fund. Magill reflected on lessons learned during the decade.

A front-end investment of time pays great dividends. In the first months of the Fellows' tenure, Magill and other senior staff hosted an in-house seminar, with readings and discussions, to give the Fel-

lows a strong grounding in both the Jessie Ball duPont Fund and the larger world of philanthropy and nonprofits. "It was time-consuming and sometimes hard," Magill said, "but the end result was worth it. Six months into the Fellowship, these young people understood the world in which they were working and could make a strong contribution."

Teaching teamwork is important. The Fellows brought excellent communication, research and technological skills, but had little to no experience working in an office as a team player. They needed, and longed for, work opportunities in which they were challenged to contribute to the collective enterprise.

Individual projects are equally important. This work experience often was the Fellow's first full-time job with regular hours and expectations. Giving them major responsibility over design and execution of singular projects was important to their professional development. "I love asking Fellows to solve a problem through a project, conduct the research on promising approaches to tough social challenges with little guidance from me or senior staff, and see what comes back," Magill said.

There is a place in organizations for smart young staff who are eager to learn and contribute. And the Jessie Ball duPont Fund learned the benefits of taking their contributions seriously. The Fellows were instrumental in developing the Fund's energy conservation initiative for small colleges, in developing and managing the Port St. Joe Advised Fund, in managing several small grants initiatives and conducted a host of research projects.

"I'm proud that the Fund played an early role in helping these young people understand better what they individually want their contributions to the common good to be," Magill said.

*A listing of Fellows and their accomplishments appears on the next page.*

**Kiara Boone**

2011-2013

Kiara Boone, a graduate of Davidson College, Davidson, North Carolina, managed the Fund's grantmaking in Port St. Joe, Florida and worked to develop youth employment programs in Jacksonville and Port St. Joe. She currently is Deputy Program Manager for the Equal Justice Initiative in Montgomery, Alabama.



**Chris McCain**

2007-2009

Chris McCain, a graduate of Davidson College, Davidson, North Carolina, developed expertise in strategies that build financial assets for low-wealth people and was involved in the Fund's asset-building work across five communities. Following his fellowship, he earned his Master of Divinity at Vanderbilt University and now serves as Director of Strategic Partnerships for the Forum for Theological Exploration in Decatur, Georgia.



**Blythe Duckworth**

2007-2009

Blythe Duckworth, a graduate of Transylvania University, Lexington, Kentucky, launched the Fund's energy conservation initiative for small liberal arts colleges. Following her fellowship, she joined the Peace Corps in Ukraine and earned her Master's in Communication from the University of Florida. Today, she serves as Research Project Manager for the Delores Barr Weaver Policy Center in Jacksonville, Florida.



**Jasmine Terry**

2009-2011

Jasmine Terry, a graduate of Agnes Scott College, Decatur, Georgia, managed the Fund's grantmaking in Port St. Joe, Florida and led the Fund's energy conservation initiative for small liberal arts colleges. Following her fellowship, she earned her Master of Divinity at Candler School of Theology at Emory University and now serves as Development Specialist at the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education in Decatur, Georgia.



**Sydney England**

2015-2017

Sydney England, a graduate of Emory & Henry College, Emory, Virginia, worked with program staff on the Fund's affordable housing and downtown development initiatives and documented part of the Fund's history. She now serves as Client Development Associate with LOCUS Impact Investing in Richmond, Virginia.



**Lucas Trainer**

2009-2011

Lucas Trainer, a graduate of Saint Leo University in St. Leo, Florida, worked to deepen the Fund's knowledge around strategies to build financial assets for low-wealth populations and worked with a coalition of local social safety net organizations. Following his fellowship he joined the staff of CFED in Washington, D.C. He now works with the law firm of Arnold & Porter Kaye Scholer in Washington.



**Virginia Hodges**

2011-2013

Virginia Hodges, a graduate of Washington & Lee University, Lexington, Virginia, managed the Fund's energy conservation initiative for small liberal arts colleges. Following her fellowship, she joined the staff of Virginia Community Capital in Richmond, Virginia. She now serves as Community Relations Specialist at Wells Fargo in Atlanta.



**Maria Wrabel**

2013-2015

Maria Wrabel graduated from Stetson University, Deland, Florida, managed the Fund's grantmaking in Port St. Joe, Florida and worked with program staff on the Fund's affordable housing initiative. Following her fellowship, she studied international development and humanitarian emergencies at the London School of Economics and Political Science. She now attends Tufts University, Boston, working toward a Master of Science in Food Policy and Applied Nutrition.



**Jordan Kinser**

2013-2015

Jordan Kinser, a graduate of Milligan College, Milligan, Tennessee, managed the Fund's technical assistance and feasibility grantmaking initiatives and served as a researcher and analyst on evaluations of key Fund projects. After his fellowship he worked with Episcopal Service Corps in Durham, N.C. He now lives in Asheville, North Carolina, where he is working toward a career in agriculture.

