



COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION  
OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

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To the Friends and Supporters of Community Foundation of the Lowcountry,

Throughout my career, I have always worn my helping coat. It was initially maroon and gold, the colors of Central Michigan University, where I spent twenty years doing student services, academic advising and program management work. I traded that coat for the green and brown of the Midland Area Community Foundation, and for twelve years there I fell in love with community-building while leading an organization through a time of significant growth. And of course, for the most recent dozen years I have worn the gold and blue of Community Foundation of the Lowcountry, and in the comments that follow, will reminisce about some of the accomplishments we have made together during that time. Once again, however, it is time for me to change the color of my helping coat.

The Board of Directors will soon open a search for the next CEO who will lead the Community Foundation team. I will continue, of course, until a smooth transition has been accomplished, most likely by the end of June 2019.

I am extremely proud of that team (board, staff, volunteers, donors) and all that has been accomplished during my time here:

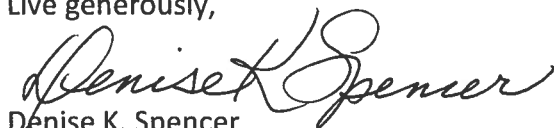
- When I arrived, the Community Foundation had increased its assets by \$15 million in the twelve years since it received its original \$20 million founding gift. In the twelve years since, we have more than doubled that \$35 million to over \$72 million and growing. And we have granted over \$71 million in grants and scholarships over our history. Imagine all of the college students, clients of nonprofits, and area residents whose lives have been enriched and improved by the investments these dollars represent!
- During the Great Recession, we avoided layoffs, focused our grantmaking on critical community needs while reducing our spending, and built an administrative fund balance of over a year's operating costs to protect our future.
- We have given birth to a broadly-recognized public art exhibition and as a result, a growing collection of large-scale sculpture is enhancing both the landscape and the area's reputation as an arts destination.

- When our strategic plan called for an impactful initiative, we redoubled efforts on Project SAFE (Sewer Access For Everyone). We are on track to complete the \$3 million fundraising goal before June of 2020. We have raised \$2.3 million, and my personal commitment to finish this is as strong as ever. This project has gained national recognition: the HUD Award for Public/Philanthropic Partnerships. And Project SAFE was no doubt a factor in our being chosen for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Service Award. But most importantly, the quality of life of long-standing families on Hilton Head Island is being improved, as is public health, the environment, and the future of economic development.
- Our mission of “strengthening community” includes of course, strengthening nonprofits, and in recent years we have increased our own capacity to do this in several ways:
  - board and staff governance training/consulting—things such as board roles and responsibilities, endowment-building, board orientation, strategy and policy-development.
  - connecting NPOs to volunteers and to new donors through technology-based portals and more.
- Matthew and Irma: The hurricane pre-planning was up-to-date and ready, data was protected, operations from evacuation locations were established, the website was activated for donations and applications for support. The first round of grant checks were in the accounts of first responders by the next business day. We were on the ground, helping those on the ground, and grateful to be of service.

There is so much more. I hope you are as proud of the work as I am, and that you can envision your role in building the future with this amazing organization. The Community Foundation needs YOU to perpetuate the values and principles that have brought it this far.

In adding up the years, it could be argued that I’ve earned a gold watch and beach chair. But I am not planning to turn in my helping coat for those things. I’m building the infrastructure for a new nonprofit consultancy, PhilanTOPICS, and my coat of many colors will again adapt to a new hue. I hope to have many times to see you and thank you and build community with you over the next year and beyond, and am blessed by each of you more than can be expressed. I simply ask that you continue to...

Live generously,



Denise K. Spencer  
President and CEO

Community Foundation of the Lowcountry