

MEMBER VOICES

Helen Cunningham Executive Director Samuel S. Fels Fund

In her own words...

One of the best funding decisions I/we ever made ...

Rachel Bagby was an old lady working in Mantua, doing all kinds of good things for her downtrodden neighborhood. We gave her \$20,000 toward starting a day care program. She spent it buying a property to house a senior program. The property had become available and she bought it to save the block AND house her seniors. The next year we gave her \$20,000 more to start the day care.

My biggest missed opportunity/mistake/lesson learned ...

Early in my career I thought I knew what a board member would want and presented a recommendation aimed at pleasing him, putting aside my view. He went against the recommendation at the board meeting. I learned to present only recommendations that I can stand behind with my whole heart. We can discuss differing opinions and reach agreement, but I can only defend what I really believe.

What keeps me up at night...

is the public school system. Nobody seems to know how to bring high quality education to scale. Without a solid education, the poor stay poor and their children are poor. Public education is THE nut to crack in Philadelphia and philanthropy has not found the way to push reform fast enough.

June 2010

Vital Statistics

SAMUEL S. FELS FUND

Grantmaker Type: Private Foundation

Year Founded: 1935

Total Charitable Assets: \$45 million

Annual Grants: \$2 million

Primary Location: Philadelphia, PA

Mission/Principal Funding Areas:
Arts and culture; public education; community

Name/position of other Key Leaders:
Mindy Posoff, Board Chair

Member of DVG since: 1988 (founding member)

Personal Involvement with DVG:
I was chair of the board when we voted to "let in " the NGOs to our annual conference- a highlight. DVG's sponsorship of the Soros /Emma Lazarus collaborative was another turning point. I have met many of my best colleagues through DVG events, people on whom I rely as colleagues for guidance and information.

More information:

www.samfels.org