

The Mix Master

KRISTIN O'MALLEY, PRESIDENT AND CEO



I'm a Mixmaster. Have been since the '80s. And lately, my "Country-Boy-Road-Warrior" mix is the only thing blasting through the car speakers: *Life is a Highway*, *Every Mile a Memory*, *Red Dirt Road* and *Dirt Road Anthem*. I know every skip, crackle, and pause on this well-used mix, because after a quick daily touch-down at the office, Willy and I are inevitably *On the Road Again*. And, by the time October rolls around every year, I'm feeling a lot like a Johnny Cash song: *I've Been Everywhere*.

While Foundation work hasn't taken me to Fond du Lac, Little Rock, or any of the other 91 places fired off in rapid succession in this name-dropping ditty, it has taken me all over the Cape for Road Warrior Recon, reconnaissance missions with the movers and shakers in the region.

This year, in preparation for a follow-up to our 2009 report "Understanding Cape Cod", we've shifted our meetings with industry experts into extra high gear. The original report compiled critical data about Cape Cod and profiled the "promising practices" that were addressing some of the community's most pressing needs at the time. Well, we all know a lot can change in a community in a decade. And, over the years, the Foundation has adopted new approaches to problem-solving as well. So, in celebration of our 30th anniversary, we've hit the road to meet with community and nonprofit leaders for another intensive look at today's challenges, promising practices, and hard-core data. The report, which will be released in early 2020, will guide our decision-making as funders and civic leaders and will also be available to the community as a resource and agent for change.

Other days, after taking a *Highway 20 Ride* with the Zac Brown Band, I'm taking meetings with local and regional funders who want a deeper understanding of the nonprofit landscape on Cape Cod. Just like us, independent funders want to know that their resources will make a difference in the community. Whether it is sharing information about broad-based community needs, philanthropic trends, or the Foundation's grantmaking and community leadership philosophy, we're frequently invited into community conversations.

We're also frequently invited to join regional collaboratives and participate in strategic planning and community needs assessment sessions. While our unique purview as a community foundation brings objectivity and insight to others, we also learn a ton from people who are intimately connected to programmatic work, day in and day out. This information-sharing helps us be stronger partners with our donors, grantees, and the community.

You might think all this driving around would drive me crazy (especially when I'm at a summer standstill on Route 6). However, you simply can't lead a community foundation without being out in the community. Our work isn't about check-writing, paper pushing, and arms-length relationships. It's up front and personal. It's about listening, learning, and seeing things for yourself: the needs, the challenges, the progress, and the triumphs.

When you support the Foundation, you fortify this entire philanthropic network. You help connect civic leaders, nonprofit leaders, collaboratives, and individual donors so that we can learn from each other, share resources, and drive social change individually and collectively. That's powerful stuff. I can hear the mix tape now.

Chariots of Fire. The theme from *Rocky*. And definitely--most definitely--Katy Perry's *Roar*.