



NEWS from the FOUNDATION

From Fellow to Chief Operating Officer: 20 Years of Grant Making

By: Matt Carpenter, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer

In March 1999, I was preparing to leave the U.S. Air Force after six years as an Intelligence Officer. Through good connections and equally good luck, I ended up at a breakfast meeting with Mary Lou Makepeace, then-Mayor of Colorado Springs. When she learned that I wanted to connect with local leaders and make a difference in the community, Mayor Makepeace recommended I consider working for El Pomar Foundation.

I joined the Foundation as a participant in the Fellowship program in August of 1999. My Fellowship highlights included planning many special events in Penrose House and working with El Pomar's Youth in Community Service (EPYCS) program, a high school student philanthropy program that has since been retired by the Foundation. These experiences offered me the unique opportunity to learn about nonprofits throughout the state and to network in and better understand the Pikes Peak region. After my two years as a Fellow, I was extremely grateful to Bill Hybl, Dave Palenchar and Tony Koren, then-director of the Fellowship, for the opportunity to stay at El Pomar as a member of the staff and work in the grants office.

Kristin Todd, now Executive Vice President at Daniels Fund, was my first boss in El Pomar's grants office. She, along with Dave Palenchar, taught me the ins and outs of the grant making process and how the Trustees honor the intent of our founders, Julie and Spencer Penrose. Since then, the Foundation's grant making has evolved to meet the needs of Colorado while always maintaining alignment with the interests of the Penroses.

In 2002, El Pomar's leadership determined that the Foundation was not serving the entire state, specifically rural Colorado, to the full extent of the Penroses' wishes. Consequently, the Trustees created the Regional Partnerships program, which now convenes more than 70 Colorado community members serving on 11 regional councils. The regional councils provide grant recommendations to El Pomar's Trustees, with the potential for a combined annual impact of more than \$2 million across the state. Since the founding of Regional Partnerships, grants approved in rural Colorado have increased dramatically, comprising 50 percent of all grants approved in 2018. Later, in 2007, the Trustees began limiting the size of capital grant requests to emphasize program and general operating support grants to organizations aiding those most affected by the economic conditions at the time. The Trustees felt this shift enabled El Pomar to support a wider variety of causes, and since 2011 have not considered capital grant requests exceeding \$100,000 unless the request is initiated by the Foundation.

Almost twenty years after first learning about El Pomar Foundation from Mayor Makepeace, I was named Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of El Pomar Foundation. In this role, I oversee El Pomar's grant making and community stewardship programs, and I am honored to continue to collaborate with nonprofits and communities supporting the Penroses' mission "to enhance, encourage and promote the current and future well-being of the people of Colorado." The past two decades have flown by, and I look forward to future partnerships and opportunities to serve Colorado.