



INTERVIEW WITH PAULA KAISER VANDAM – NOVEMBER 28, 2011

Our State of Generosity, a project of the Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy (JCP) at Grand Valley State University (GVSU), in partnership with the Council of Michigan Foundations (CMF), Michigan Nonprofit Association (MNA), Michigan Community Service Commission (MCSC), and GVSU Libraries' Special Collections & University Archives present:

An interview with Paula Kaiser VanDam on November 28, 2011. Conducted by Kathryn Agard, primary author and interviewer for *Our State of Generosity*. Recorded at the Johnson Center for Philanthropy in Grand Rapids, Michigan. This interview is part of a series in the project, *Our State of Generosity* (OSoG). OSoG is a partnership of scholars, practitioners, and funders from four institutions – the Johnson Center; CMF; MNA; and MCSC – that collectively form the backbone of the state's philanthropic, voluntary, and nonprofit infrastructure. OSoG's mission is to capture, preserve, analyze, and share the developments, achievements, and experience that, over a period of 40 years, made Michigan a State of Generosity.

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Abridged: The following interview has been edited to assist readability. Extraneous verbal pauses and informal personal conversation not related to the topic of Michigan philanthropy have been deleted. Footnotes to the transcript have been added clarifying any factual errors in the memory of the person interviewed.

Text of the interview questions are as asked. Individuals interviewed have had the opportunity to add or edit their answers in order to provide their most accurate answers to the questions. For these reasons, the edited transcript may not exactly reflect the recorded interview.

Susan Harrison-Wolffis (SH): Leadership is such an important part of this, but what brought you to volunteer work, what brought you to nonprofits?

Paula Kaiser VanDam (PV): I actually grew up in Indiana, attended Catholic school. In my early elementary years, and even from that day, was really involved in service learning back in the day before it was even called that. I specifically remember in the fifth grade I led a project where we were recycling newspapers to raise money for the local Humane Society and we are able to donate that money and see a difference. We worked with our fifth grade teacher to really pick that

issue and figure how we wanted to raise money to do it. I think way back then I started my beginning to think about how you make a difference [00:01:00] in the world. Then as I went on to college I went to a small university in Indiana that had a tremendous focus on community service; DePauw University has tremendous service learning incorporated into the academics and so I just continued to make a difference. Then when I graduated from college I had an opportunity to go work for the Governor's Volunteer Office in the state of Indiana under Evan Byah and was mentored by a woman there named Judy McKellip and Sharon Hunt. Really at that time is when the '93 Act passed to create AmeriCorps and every state had to create a commission in order to administer the AmeriCorps funds under President Clinton. Michigan had a commission and so I got to know the staff of that commission and we really studied why they had created their commission back in '91 and its purpose and really used that as a model for creating the Michigan, or the Indiana commission. In getting to know the Michigan folks I saw what tremendous leaders they were in this state, not that Indiana didn't [00:02:00] have great leaders but at the time service and volunteerism was just forming there. I thought I could come to Michigan and really learn from such tremendous leaders like Dottie Johnson and Russ Mawby and Michelle Engler. So I decided to join the staff and come to Michigan to really learn under some of the most, I think, thoughtful and successful leaders of the nonprofit and volunteerism field.

SH: Can you talk with me about your contemporaries in this field and what drives someone in their 30-something, 40-something to be in a non-corporate world.

PV: Well [00:03:00] I think there are many individuals from my generation who want to make a difference and the Commission is a great way to do that. Although we really serve as a large funder for service and volunteerism, at the end of the day we are seeing the impact that we're having whether it's a public safety issue in the inner city of Detroit or an education issue in Detroit or an environmental issue in northern Michigan. You know, the impact that we are having is tremendous and it's a great way to use your talents to make a big difference in a state like Michigan.

SH: Do you think it is because we are in Michigan that always seems to have such need, even in the good times, that that's why this is a hotbed of volunteerism and service learning and philanthropy. Is it the state, the people, the culture?

PV: I think it is the people and the culture. I think that Michigan has just had this culture of rolling up their sleeves and wanting to help and contribute in some way. [00:04:00] So I think that that culture, you don't always find that in other communities; whether you're in the Upper Peninsula or in Detroit or Benton Harbor, people want to make a difference, they want to live in communities that are vibrant and healthy and safe and producing healthy kids and educated kids. So people are always looking for ways to help and contribute to make sure that their community the best community it can be.



SH: Is that faith-based, is it neighborhood-based, from your perspective. Are we who we are because this is such an area of faith-based, not even just churches but a people who are acting out on faith? Is it because of being in small communities, people knowing their neighbors.

PV: I think it is a variety of things, I mean, I think some of it is driven through faith, obviously there's a strong connection to service and so for those individuals who have that faith connection, I think that [00:05:00] certainly contributes. I think families too, depending, I think often there is a member of a family who has really bought into this idea of service and giving back. I think that can have a tremendous impact on generations of individuals from that family. But I also think our schools have had an impact. Schools have always had, some schools have a community service requirement, others have gone more stringent and have connected service as part the curriculum through service learning. So I think there is a variety of ways for which people are being inspired and encouraged to contribute and act and be part of making a difference in communities.

SH: For you it was school?

PV: For me it was school and family and church, I mean, a combination. As I said, my early education was sort of, was Catholic school and so, of course, service was an important component to that. The schools I chose after that had strong service components but even my family. We were always, I remember my parents volunteering for every committee at school and leading the Fall Festival or leading some other [00:06:00] group at church and so, you know, very active and just they created the expectation that, you know, when you've been given a lot you're expected to give back. I was very involved in high school and president of our student council, always looking for ways to kind of lead and give back and help make a better environment for our school.

SH: And you always wanted to be in the leadership role?

[Laughter]

PV: I guess. I ended up there whether I wanted it or not.

SH: There is a theory that you are who you are because of who you were then and it always focuses on when you are ten, which is fifth grade and so how that has really affected you both personally and professionally.

PV: Yeah, 'cause I told you the story of the fifth grade and the service project [00:07:00] and I was the leader of that project and asked by my teacher to do that. I think throughout my schooling I was always involved in a leadership position serving on student council, being the class president, those kinds of things and always felt, I guess, comfortable in that role and excited to be in that



role in order to make a difference; like I said, to have people's educations be better to have more activities or opportunities for young people who are in school, those kinds of things.

SH: What kind of advice would you give to high school students or 10-year-olds? You can choose.

PV: I think that it's important to be to do something that you're really passionate about so if you want to be a leader, I think everybody has leadership qualities. I don't think that means if you weren't a leader in fifth grade you can't be a leader. I think people have to find the leadership opportunities that they're most comfortable with and sometimes that's in their professional life and sometimes that might be in their personal life through volunteering and just taking a lead [00:08:00] on a committee or group. I think people have to find what's most meaningful for them and what they're most comfortable with and when they do, they'll be absolutely successful with it.

SH: What's next for you?

PV: Good question. I've only been the Executive Director of the commission for two years, there's a lot more I want to accomplish at the commission before I think about my next position but it will be somewhere here in Michigan. There's too many opportunities, too many tremendous organizations. I don't see myself ever leaving this state so it will be an opportunity here, potentially in government. I found my passion in government. The commission is within governments and I think there's a real role and there is a need for real leadership in government and so I will most likely remain in the government sector in some way, shape or form.

SH: Anything else personally you would like to tell me about you, your upbringing, and your [00:09:00] life now?

[Laughter]

PV: I have young children so my two sons, four and six. It's fun because I'm now at that stage where I'm being asked to serve at their school and do a variety of things, so I look forward to those opportunities. I've also been a big sister now for about eight years, so I mentor. I am on my third student, but I mentor a fourth-grade boy and we do lunch once a week together and I mentor him because I think it's important. I also think that you shouldn't ask others to volunteer if you're not willing to do it and leading by example is extremely important. So I look for the ways in which I can be connected and volunteering and making a difference in my community on a regular basis.

SH: And that was going to be my final question unless you had something to add. Who do you mentor? [00:10:00]

PV: On my staff, there's a number of young folks on my staff that I obviously serve as a mentor to you in hopes that I'm creating the next generation of really talented leaders that can go into either



the government sector or the nonprofit sector. Then through AmeriCorps I have the opportunity to interact with some of our AmeriCorps members throughout the year. Although I don't mentor them, I would say, formally, it's great to just have the opportunity to listen to their story and really encourage them to think about how they continue to make a difference. Then nationally I'm often, because I've been at the commission for a number years, I often am asked to mentor new Executive Director's of state commissions around the country and so I, of course, always agree because I wouldn't be where I am today if I hadn't been mentored by some tremendous individuals.

Kathy Agard: Are you consciously working with your own kids to internalize what you all value [00:11:00] as a family?

PV: I do. I mean, it is interesting to have those conversations with a four and a six-year-old about how to make a difference and to be thoughtful about how fortunate we are and that we need to make it, you know, we need to give back in some way. So we have those conversations and we have those moments, and sometimes there are actually funny conversations because the reaction of a four-year-old when you're trying to have a serious conversation isn't always that, but we talk about that. We talk about how people don't have food, how people are in these times without clothing, don't know where their next meal is and ways in which we can make a difference and I encourage my kids to be thoughtful about how they can be helpful with those individuals.

SH: Are they in preschool?

PV: Kindergarten and preschool.

SH: So they are having a chance to put the penny in the UNICEF Fund.

PV: Exactly, but in other ways too, you know, to experience it. I try it to get them out on days of service and to be part of some of the things that I'm part of so that they see the bigger picture. [00:12:00] We participated in the river cleanup in Lansing last year and they really, they enjoyed it, although they don't totally understand why were doing it, they still, you know, being out there is just enough. I think enough of those opportunities and they'll be future AmeriCorps members. I talk about mentoring Jacob, my fourth grade lunch buddy, and they are very interested. So I took a picture of him so they could see what he looks like; they're very interested about what I do with him and why so we have those conversations at dinner sometimes.[00:13:00]

KA: Refresh for me all of your various roles. Kind of run through your professional history related to those organizations.

PV: I served at the commission now since 1995 and I've held various roles within that. During that time some of those roles included strategic partnerships with CMF, like Michigan Cares. I directed



Michigan Cares for a couple of years and most recently I've been the Executive Director now for two years.

KA: [00:14:00] What about your relationship with MNA. Do you have any formal relationship with them?

PV: No. We fund them and they have an AmeriCorps grant through us as well, a couple actually.

KA: Can you tell me the story of the coming together of the Michigan Community Service Commission and particularly any roles the leaders of CMF or MNA or the leaders of those organizations played?

PV: So the commission was created in 1991 by Gov. Engler and First Lady Michelle Engler and it was really two people I think that really inspired them to create it. It was Russ Mawby from the Kellogg Foundation, who had already created the Michigan Nonprofit Association, who said he was always a big believer that there was a three-legged stool; the government played a role, as well as the nonprofit [00:15:00] sector, as well as the philanthropic sector. He felt like it was time for the government sector to step up and be active in making change in communities. The other person who was instrumental was Gov. Romney who actually came to the Englers and said, "this would be a great thing to do." He was a big advocate for volunteer centers nationally in the volunteer sector and said it would be important for Governor Engler, at the time, to really create an office that would really be focused around volunteerism.

KA: Where were we in the creation relative to the Corporation for National and Community Service?

PV: The commission was created about two years prior to the creation of the Corporation for National and Community Service, at the time there was a small federal initiative called the Commission for National and Community Service. So when President Clinton was elected, he had this big vision to expand service all over the country and he created AmeriCorps at that time and when he created AmeriCorps [00:16:00] that's when the Corporation was really formalized. He merged three federal offices, a White House office action and this commission together to create the Corporation for National and Community Service. Really, Michigan was well-positioned because we already had a commission in place to really take advantage of these new federal dollars that would be coming into our states, where other states were just having to sort of quickly pull together and create a commission on community service during the time.

KA: Can you tell me a little bit about the Michigan Commissioners. What kinds of people are they? Where did you draw them from?



PV: Sure and some of our founding commissioners like Dottie Johnson, obviously was the CEO presidency of the Council on Michigan Foundations, so she was one of our founding members. We also have always had funders, so Julie Fisher Cummings was also very active on the CMF board and a philanthropist in general, was one of our founding commissioners as well. We had folks from the Kellogg Foundation, the corporate sector have always been represented in, then strategic nonprofit organizations [00:17:00] as well have been represented on our board.

KA: How did they get on the board?

PV They are all appointed by the governor, so depending on the time, you know, which governor is in office they appoint about a third of the board each year.

KA: Can you talk a little bit about the role Michelle Engler played?

PV: Sure. Mrs. Engler, Michelle, is our founding chair and she served as the chair for 10 of the 12 years that they were in office. She felt so strongly about the commission and the work of the commission that she stepped down two years before they were term-limited because she wanted to ensure a smooth transition. She really hoped the next administration would embrace the commission as much as she and Gov. Engler had and in fact, that worked. Russ Mawby was brought in to be the interim chair and he served as our sort of transitional chair for two years and was really instrumental in helping us successfully transition to Gov. Granholm and First Gentleman Mulhern. First Gentleman Mulhern carried on the tradition that Michelle started by having the spouse of the governor serve as the acting chair of the [00:18:00] commission.

KA: What about the CEO that you took over from? How did that all occur?

PV: I served as the CEO for about the last two and half years and I served as Deputy Director prior to that. I joined the staff in 1995 and served in a variety of positions and there came a time when Dan Mulhern asked me if I would move from Deputy Director and accept the CEO position of the commission. I was happy to accept that and looked forward to the opportunity to really lead this organization.

KA: How do you think other people in commissions around the country look at the Michigan Commission?

PV: I think we've been a leader ever since we were really created. I mean just to be candid, at the time that the commission was created in '93 when the legislation passed, I was [00:19:00] actually working in Governor Byah's office in Indiana and we actually had to create the Indiana Commission for National and Community Service. Because Michigan already had one, who do you think we called, of course? We called our neighbor state, at the time, and went up and visited and looked at their commission and how it was structured and so it really served as an inspiration



for what we tried to create back in Indiana. As a result, I got to know the folks in Michigan and they said “hey, why don’t you come to Michigan and start working at the commission?” So, I joined. I think that’s just an example from the very beginning how Michigan has always served as a leader. The state commissions have an association, a national association and one of the former executive directors served as the chair and I actually currently serve as the chair of that national association as well. So I think Michigan is always looked to for the ongoing leadership around service and volunteerism.

KA: So [00:20:00] you were involved in funding a whole broad range of charitable efforts as a funder. Can you describe some of the major projects that you have been funding and any issues that came up? We can talk about Michigan Cares. I was a problem child myself in that one and how the partner organizations have facilitated what you are trying to do as a funder. The ones I have are Michigan Cares, Learn and Serve, AmeriCorps Vista, Senior Volunteer Corps.

PV: So Vista and Senior Volunteer Corps, we have less of a role because the corporation state office, which is based out of Detroit, really takes the lead on those two. So AmeriCorps, Learn and Serve, and Michigan Cares. Our most recent one is called about Volunteer Michigan, which is a partnership with the Volunteer Centers of Michigan.

KA: So tell me about how those came about and what they do and what impact they have.

PV: So we look at service as a strategy and have [00:21:00] for many years and how do we use the service and volunteerism to address some of our toughest challenges in the state. We’ve used AmeriCorps in one strategic way, we place individuals, they do a year of service in the nonprofit or it could be a government agency and in exchange they receive a small stipend and then they receive an education award at the end of that. But these individuals are addressing some of Michigan’s biggest issues: foreclosure, homelessness, the kids who are not performing in school—both, either on the far end meaning they are about to drop out or on the very beginning end, making sure that they have the literacy skills that they need to be successful in school. So it runs the gamut. We are focusing on the environment, those kinds of things. Often, many foundations across the state are partnering with us because there are some match dollars that are needed at the local level to actually receive these grants. So many funders step forward and provide much of that match dollars at the local level [00:22:00] in order for us to be able to leverage these federal resources.

KA: What have been some of the successes and what have been some of the problems that happen?

PV: Successes I would just say is that we are producing a whole culture of individuals who are very civically minded. We know that after one year of full-time AmeriCorps service, people tend to go into jobs that are in the nonprofit or public sector. We also know that they continue, they tend



to stay in the communities where they served which, at a time in Michigan when we've lost so much of our young talent, this is a program that's actually trying to retain young talent in our state. We know that these individuals continue to be very civically involved either through volunteerism or even some go on to seek elected office. So we know that in each year, we are graduating between 1,100 and 1,200 individuals through this year of service, so in the history of the commission over 20,000 individuals have served, have done a year of service through AmeriCorps. [00:23:00] We know we're really helping to contribute by producing some really talented individuals who are in communities now, who are continuing to make a difference.

KA: Can you talk a little bit about the relationship with the Volunteer Centers and how they are developing across the state.

PV: Sure. We have actually partnered with the Volunteer Centers, I would say, in a couple of ways. So, one, Michigan Cares was really one of our first initiatives that, I would say, really looked at volunteer infrastructure at a community level. That was an initiative between the commission and the Council of Michigan Foundations. We asked Community Foundations to really serve as a neutral convener to assess the volunteer infrastructure and communities and to think about putting a plan together for how communities might better be able to leverage some of these new federal dollars that were coming down the pipeline. What we found out of that process, in some cases some of the strongest volunteer centers that we still have actually, were developed as a result of the Michigan Cares process. So, Volunteer [00:24:00] Muskegon, Resource Genesee, which is the Volunteer Center in Flint, were products that came out of that because the Community Foundation, the United Ways, the other groups came together to say what is it that we need to put into place in order to be able to take advantage of these resources. That really was one of the most successful projects, I would say, that we did with Volunteer Centers of Michigan.

Most recently, there is a new pot of money through the Serve America Act that was passed, called the Volunteer Generation Fund. We are partnering with the Volunteer Centers of Michigan to actually strengthen volunteer centers to really develop a model program of how service can be used to address either a public safety or public health issue. Also, we are looking to enhance the technology of volunteer centers all across the state. So, we are providing small mini-grants to the volunteer centers in order to increase and take advantage of some new volunteer technology that is going to make a huge difference in the way people can access, both people [00:25:00] who are interested in volunteering and nonprofits who actually want to post volunteer opportunities. So, we are really excited about that. The other initiative that we had, that I would be remiss not to talk about, is our volunteer investment grants which was actually an endowment building program that was funded by the state of Michigan in the Legislature to help volunteer centers actually create an endowment fund. That lasted for about 10 years where we worked and Volunteer Centers provided either a two-to-one or a one-for-one match and the match dollars for those grants were endowed in community foundations all across the state. Volunteer centers now have a small pot of money that's helping with their overall sustainability.



KA: Can you comment on the role of your relationship with the other three partners [00:26:00] that we are interviewing for this so with CMF, MNA and the Johnson Center. Do the relationships work, if so, yes or are there places where there are tensions, if so, what are those and how do they get worked out?

PV: Well I think that institutions, I mean, we all have our roles to play and I think we are sort of really clear about what it is we are in charge of doing and we try to stay in our lane, for lack of a better word, but the relationship is absolutely essential. We couldn't do the work that we need to do without the Council of Michigan Foundations, without MNA, and without The Johnson Center. They just been instrumental, whether it's funding that we want to do, whether it's programmatic things that we want to do. Michigan Nonprofit has always been a great partner of ours in either helping incubate [00:27:00] new initiatives that we are trying to incubate, partner in terms of expanding because of the many affiliates that Michigan Nonprofit Association has so, the affiliates that they have, the Michigan Campus Compact, The Volunteer Centers of Michigan, those are all integrate programs and partners of ours and the work that we do around trying to expand service and volunteerism around the state. We work with them on a variety of things, from days of service to increasing volunteer infrastructure in communities, so they have just been an absolute essential partner in our work.

The Council of Michigan Foundations, of course, has provided ongoing important resources or helping to leverage those resources whether it's for match dollars for AmeriCorps grants around the state or other initiatives. I mean, Rob Collier and his predecessor, Dottie, were both instrumental and have – Rob serves as the vice [00:28:00] chair of our commission board and he's just been instrumental in helping shape where the direction of the commission and how it fits in the larger picture both funders, as well as instrumental in even the relationships with the governor's office because Rob has really positioned the philanthropic sector really carefully and strategically around some of the Governors initiatives.

KA: The natural inclination of a good CEO is to expand their organization and to compete. Why do you think it is different in Michigan?

PV: Yeah, I think it is. I think part of it is just relationships, because I mean strategically were all connected in some way. I serve on the MNA board, Kyle Caldwell, who is the head of the Michigan Nonprofit Association, is my former boss as he served as the Executive Director of the commission a few years ago, so obviously I know Kyle well and served as his deputy for a number of years. So I think it is the relationships that makes the [00:29:00] difference. I mean, I think our organizations are strategically positioned in a way that the relationships are there. It has to be more than relationships though because obviously people move on to other things and so how do you have some institutional connections and I think through the Connect Michigan Alliance Fund



and other things we've been very strategic to create not only the personal and professional relationships but some institutional connectedness that will continue always.

KA: From your point of view has it been intentional?

PV: I think it has been very intentional. I don't think it's—I think from the founders who thought about creating the commission and all of Michigan Nonprofit Association—I mean, I think quite frankly, Russ Mawby is probably the most intentional and the one who has really shaped what our relationship and our organizations look like. Today he still influences that; Russ served on our board for 12 years, he just recently left our board. We were sad to see it, but we certainly understand he's ready to move on to [00:30:00] his own retirement in whatever way he wants to do that. I think, absolutely, they are very intentional in terms of how connected our organizations are.

KA: Can you talk about the qualities of leadership?

PV: I think first there is the vision, right? I mean, there's always this larger vision and always willing to take a leap of faith and do something that nobody else has ever done. We did that with the volunteer investment grants, we did that with the number of issues, the ConnectMichigan Alliance [00:31:00] which was the \$20 million endowment fund that was created. I think Michigan has always been bold in terms of not being afraid to try something and not ever being sure if it will work or not work, but I think that having that vision and being bold is really important. I also think being collaborative has been so incredibly important; I think we all realize none of us could do this work alone. I think each of us, as leaders of the organization, certainly recognize that we have to go out and find the correct partners whether that's, you know, the ones we are mentioning on this as part of this initiative or others that it takes more than just us as individuals and organizations to get the work done and so how do we bring more people together, to get it done. I also think how do you bring people together and raise the issues and help convene folks around key things and so people are understanding. I also think it's about watching and staying in tune. I think you have to have a certain amount of political savviness because in this work around the nonprofit [00:32:00] sector there's lots of things that are happening in the government sector that have tremendous impact on the nonprofit sector and so you have to be connected. You can't turn your eyes and be blinded to what's happening in the government sector because there is a lot that's impacting the nonprofit sector. It is being able to do all of those things that really makes a huge difference.

KA: Can you think of a time when there was a conflict that got resolved and the process of resolution?

PV: I would say, you know, I think that there was a time when there was a conflict. I think, as always, there is—you know, we don't all live in this perfect world where there's never going to be



issues that come up. I think it was that leadership came to the table and really looked at the issue and members of the board, it wasn't just the CEOs of the organization, so members of the various boards came together to look at the issue and come out with some recommendations that at the end of [00:33:00] the day the organizations were able to accept.

KA: When you think about this set of leadership in Michigan, how do they handle power? How do they leverage the power that they have? How do they use the power that they have?

PV: I think that folks have used that power very strategically. I don't think that power has been abused in any way. I think that power has been used to really lead an effort to have such a strong nonprofit sector and a strong volunteer sector in our state. I think some people have used that power very strategically to advance the cause not advance themselves, which is a difference.

KA: So what has been difficult in Michigan's philanthropy and nonprofit community? [00:34:00]

PV: I think the economy obviously had a tremendous impact and we are going to continue to feel that for the coming years. Obviously, in the government sector, we've seen our state resources diminished so we've seen a significant cut. We received a 50% cut to our general fund investment in 2008 and thank goodness we've sort of maintained level funding since then which still, in these cases, is actually success in these times. I think it had tremendous impact because, with the crash of the market and all of that, I mean, unfortunately even foundation investments are down in our state and so at a time when the social needs are extraordinarily high, we unfortunately... I mean, there's less resources within our state to really address and solve the problems that we are faced with. I think we also know that there's not enough money, ever, to solve all the problems and so it's only when people roll up their sleeves and are also contributing where we are actually going to be able to really solve [00:35:00] some of the huge and social issues that are in our state.

KA: What influence did Gov. Romney have?

PV: He did. I mean you know, he was really I would say the grandfather of the volunteer sector, at least certainly in Michigan and had huge tremendous impact nationally even. I mean, he was the one who believed in the volunteer centers and thought every community needed a volunteer center where people could go to find out how to be involved in their community and he pushed. He's the one who, he created a National Association for Volunteer Centers, he was instrumental with the creation of the Points of Light Institute which then became, you know, really the umbrella for volunteer centers over the long haul. So, he just totally believed that every community needed and should have a volunteer center and we should find ways to make sure that that happened. [00:36:00]



KA: Was there anything else you wanted to make sure we had on record about this idea of the fact that this state has something to share with other places about how the philanthropic world works.

PV: I think people are always intrigued with how Michigan does it and then I think people think, "We could never do that," and I think that's not true. I think people have to have a commitment and a vision for how to get it done. I mean whoever thought...I mean when you think back of all the things that happened here in Michigan, who would've thought that we would've leveraged \$10 million dollars from the state many years ago to create, to be matched with \$10 million dollars from the private sector, to create the ConnectMichigan Alliance. Then even the merger of ConnectMichigan Alliance with the Michigan Nonprofit Association, I mean there are lots of things that have happened. It's been that vision that has kept people at the table and committed to making sure that it gets done and so I think if other states wanted to do this work, they could do it. [00:37:00] They just have to know what their vision is in order to get it done and make sure that people are truly committed and it will happen. I do agree that we are unique, I mean we have more volunteer centers than any other state, the number of foundations that we have including community foundations...there's no other state like it but you know it was the vision of Russ and others who really made that happen. So, if they can find the Russ' in their own state to make a difference, I mean, they could clearly replicate some of the tremendous things that we've been able to do here in Michigan.

KA: What do you think can be learned about developing young professionals in this field?

PV: Yeah, absolutely we need more mentors for that. I think and it has been places like the Johnson Center [00:38:00] that are actually I think really mentoring some of the best talent that are coming out into the nonprofit sector and in hopefully the government sector as well but we need more of that. We see the passion through our AmeriCorps members, these individuals who are graduating, who want to make a difference and we got to find some kind of pipeline for them to get them into communities into positions where they can truly make a difference. I think incubating that talent is extraordinarily important; we have to find new and other ways to do that as well.

