

## **THE INVESTOR: PITTSBURGH LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION**

by Brian Miller

The vision was—and is—as audacious as the view from where it was first hatched. Looking down from Mt. Washington over the Monongahela River valley at the scene of two rivers flowing boldly to form a third and of a city of gleaming towers and tree-lined residential streets built from the wealth of the steel industry, Sam Shoemaker dreamed: “I have a vision that Pittsburgh will one day be as famous for God as it is for steel.” A tall order, this simple and clear vision still captures the hearts and minds of many today. More than just a slogan, it is the unapologetic vision of the Pittsburgh Leadership Foundation (PLF).

Shoemaker’s dream seems even today to compel the leaders of this faith-based intermediary serving the citizens of this old river town. More than that, as the nation’s oldest leadership foundation, the Pittsburgh Leadership Foundation serves as a pioneer and as one of the models for intermediaries in many urban centers around the country.

By 1978, a spirit of ecumenism and a commitment to practical engagement in the affairs of this city had already taken root deep in the hearts of a group of Christian men and women from all strains of the Pittsburgh Christian community. For more than two decades prior to 1978, men like Sam Shoemaker—an Episcopalian priest—and Don James, a local businessman, had joined with a small group of like-minded Christians to pray for a full day each month for the needs of their city. It was this commitment to each other and to the increasing needs of their urban area that pressed these leaders together. In time, the participants started seeking some formal venue for their efforts, some more organized means through which to impact their city.

At that time, Reid Carpenter took the reins of a new “little entity” they named the Pittsburgh Leadership Foundation (PLF), and, for almost 25 years, has shepherded the evangelical network through steady growth—in vision, scope, and impact. Today, PLF coordinates 16 projects, partners with at least nine formal local Affiliates, and participates in three National Partnerships. One of these, the Council of Leadership Foundations, it helped found in order to replicate the intermediary model in other American cities.

Current PLF leadership view the 24 years since 1978 as the Foundation’s first generation of growth and development. During these years, the Foundation created 40 organizations and ministries, provided funding to 50 additional

projects, trained hundreds of leaders for their tasks, and according to PLF materials, “brought healing and hope to tens of thousands of men, women and children in Pittsburgh.” This intermediary describes its “pass through” and capacity-building efforts in investment terms: “We’ve raised and disbursed upwards of \$100 million [since 1978]; more importantly, nearly \$500 million was leveraged into service to these same ministries by our leadership in creating and seed-funding these important initiatives.” The operating revenue of Pittsburgh Leadership Foundation was over \$6 million in 2001.

The strategy of the Pittsburgh Leadership Foundation—to invest in the leaders who are engaged in effective, Christ-centered solutions and to initiate change in under-served areas—has brought PLF staff face-to-face with a wide variety of pressing urban issues: youth development, drug and alcohol addiction, church division, neighborhood blight, and educational short-comings. In *Time* magazine in 1955, Shoemaker challenged:

*The backlog of untapped Christian conviction and belief in this city means more to it than all the coal in the hills and all the steel in the mills. If these forces can be mobilized, Pittsburgh might become a spiritual pilot plant for America.*

It is Shoemaker’s vision ringing true in their minds that keeps the PLF leaders energized. Their literature asserts:

*For both leaders and institutions, the biggest impediment to effective work is a cramped vision. Every practical effort is bound by particular goals and objectives. But, if vision is thus bounded, these efforts will be self-serving, shortsighted and divisive.*

Willing to invest long-term in a specific place, willing to relate well to those with many resources—philanthropists, churches, institutions—and to those with few—street people, middle-school children and fledgling non-profits—the staff and Board of PLF have served as a good model for other intermediaries. Their structure and values bear study. Of course, not surprisingly, Carpenter argues in PLF’s most recent Annual Report: “Our work is just beginning.”

This case study is based on discussions with Pittsburgh Leadership Foundation staff and staff of affiliated ministries. Also, several staff or lay leaders of PLF’s constituent ministries, those groups receiving the investment of PLF’s leveraging and work, were interviewed.

## Overview of PLF's Work as an Intermediary

The work of Pittsburgh Leadership Foundation is broad and takes place at many different levels. In fact, almost the full spectrum of typical intermediary activity can be seen in PLF's efforts:

- ❖ PLF staff directly serve local churches through youth programs like Pittsburgh Youth Network.
- ❖ PLF challenges and mobilizes racially and denominationally diverse Christian organizations through the Pittsburgh area for joint community projects.
- ❖ PLF addresses social problems through broad-based networking and coordination with faith-based, secular and public entities through efforts like the Coalition for Leadership, Education and Advocacy for Recovery (CLEAR).
- ❖ PLF, through its Pittsburgh Community Storehouse (a partnership with World Vision), provides grassroots ministries with access to millions of dollars of supplies for free.
- ❖ PLF incubates start-up faith-based initiatives through training efforts, fund development, and the provision of administrative infrastructure.
- ❖ PLF builds capacity in existing non-profits through training and technical assistance.

Each of these efforts requires different skills and strategies on the part of Pittsburgh Leadership Foundation. Taken as a whole, one can see how through this bold vision, Sam Shoemaker's dream just might come true.

## Equipping Local Churches

*Pittsburgh Youth Network.* From its beginning, PLF has focused on the youth of the city. Through trainings, retreats, citywide gatherings, network meetings and research, the ministry of PLF's Pittsburgh Youth Network (PYN) directly impacts the scope and scale of youth ministry in more than 400 churches and youth-serving organizations. Indirectly, staff estimate PYN impacts one third of the total young people in the greater Pittsburgh area in a given year. In fact, within PLF's youth network, the full scope of intermediary activities can be seen. Small, fledgling youth outreach programs to young people in poor neighborhoods receive valuable mentoring, encouragement, and training opportunities.

At the other end of the spectrum, established, well-funded youth programs are intentionally connected across congregations and across denominations. From his earliest pre-PLF work as a regional director for Young Life, PLF's Reid Carpenter has made youth ministry central to city-wide outreach efforts.

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The youth coordinating programs of Pittsburgh Leadership Foundation are staffed directly by PLF employees. "PLF youth initiatives continue to go where youth go and to bring them good news in their time and place," explains PYN director Brad Henderson. Currently, Henderson directs ministry to and staffs the network of 90+ youth workers from across the metropolitan Pittsburgh area. These youth pastors meet monthly to worship, pray, and coordinate the effort of local churches and para-church youth ministries. Henderson estimates that of those youth workers attending a typical monthly network meeting, half are full-time paid youth pastors and paid FBO employees; the other half are volunteers involved in lay leadership or less than half-time employees of local churches.

From these network meetings and because of the coordinating work of PLF leadership, the PYN has empowered local youth ministries to develop an impressive array of outreach and train-

ing to the young people in metro Pittsburgh. For example, *Laurelville Weekends* are high-energy, 3-day, middle and high school retreats where 2,000-3,000 young people and their leaders gather over the course of fall/winter weekends. These students come from the youth programs of some 100 different churches and dozens of denominations. Many kids attend the Laurelville retreats from small churches with no formal youth programs. Some are unconnected to churches before attending the focused retreats where they hear speakers, study the Bible, and play raucous games. In this regard, PYN provides an area-wide outreach to youth that maximizes the time, energy, and resources of many smaller local church discipleship efforts.

*Surf City* is a longer, summertime camp experience for the students of Pittsburgh's many churches. Over 1,000 middle school students—among them several groups of urban kids with no other summer camping options—attend each summer for longer periods of programming, recreation, and Bible study. Bill Pollock, director of Garfield-Larimer Ministry, says that the children with whom he works in two of Pittsburgh's more blighted neighborhoods have benefited tremendously from the Surf City Camp.

Pollock reports that over 90 percent of the children with whom he works are fatherless. Almost all are financially needy. If the mothers of these kids are churchgoers, they typically attend storefront churches with tremendous spirit and influence but with few resources to run significant age-appropriate youth programs for the congregation's teens. Pollock's organization, Garfield-Larimer Ministry (affectionately known as GLM—Greater Love Ministry—by the kids of these two historically competing neighborhoods) serves as an umbrella youth group that has a neighborhood, rather than congregational or denominational, identity.

In 1995, after being mentored informally in youth ministry for several years by PYN director Brad Henderson, Pollock says that PYN covered the cost of the summer camp for 10 students from the Garfield and Larimer neighborhoods. This began a long-term camping commitment that Pollock now fosters, with 35 young people from the two neighborhoods attending each summer. They raise funds for their own camping registration fee. In fact, in 2001, 10 older students from Pollock's youth groups served on the work crew for the Surf City camp, earning their camping fee and gaining very important leadership and ministry experience in the process.

In addition to success in accessing PYN's citywide camping programs, Pollock describes the leverage created by PYN staff in connecting well-resourced youth programs with his outreach to poor young people. He cites a stable tutoring program that uses high school students from a suburban youth group who travel 45 minutes each week to tutor grade-school students from the Garfield neighborhood. The cross-congregation, cross-class, cross-town program would not exist were it not for PLF's (Henderson's) "match-making" prowess. Pollock argues that for para-church youth programs like his Garfield-Larimer Ministry, it is only the partnership with leaders like Brad Henderson and the peer youth workers he meets through PYN that keeps his work from becoming overwhelming and frightfully isolated.

In a practical manner, the PLF youth efforts display in several other ways the vision for a united church in Pittsburgh. The programs are typically available

to youth from all area churches; many intentionally bring congregations together. For example, PYN sponsors a summer college intern program called

*Cross Trainers* that mobilizes and trains 30 college students from 12 different colleges for the youth work and summer day camps of a variety of different churches around Pittsburgh. Also, for several years, PYN has conducted citywide surveys that are used in assessing needs and developing new programs along specific, well-documented neighborhood and demographic metrics. Recently, for example, PLF formed a partnership with the University of Pittsburgh to design evaluation tools and benchmarks for youth ministry. This will intentionally build capacity in the area's churches by teaching them to evaluate their own programs and to identify those tools that work best.

PLF also serves as the on-going administrative umbrella for a few smaller youth ministries. These constituent ministries are run by long-time youth workers who are not a part of a specific church structure. In PYN, they find administrative oversight and fundraising assistance that allows greater focus on direct ministry and street-level outreach. Dale Craig Ministry and Joe Bellante Ministry are two such youth outreaches, led by their respective namesakes. Each of these youth workers is a talented and compelling minister who benefits from the organizational umbrella of the PYN.

Joe Bellante calls himself a missionary to the city. Like Paul the apostle, he has a colorful past that serves him well as he works with the tough kids at Peabody High School. In fact, he is informally viewed as that school's chaplain. He is supported by PYN as a full-time youth worker, building relationships, hosting weekly Bible studies and coaching several sports. "I couldn't do what I do without PYN," reports Bellante. "Because of them, I never have to worry about money." In fact, valuable administrative support is given to Bellante's ministry in the form of networking and public

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relations support (creating newsletters and brochures and securing valuable exposure to churches and individual donors with resources).

Dale Craig is a life-long youth worker with experience in Young Life programming and in all sorts of camping and speaking. He serves a variety of churches and other programs, discipling youth and providing assistance to less-experienced youth pastors. He agrees with Bellante that the Pittsburgh Leadership Foundation's handling of his fundraising and administration allows him to focus on what he does best—direct work with kids in poor neighborhoods. This ability to focus on the hands-on youth work—in schools, on the streets, in sports settings—is invaluable to him. In addition, Craig notes the value of the mentoring and encouragement he receives from PLF staff. It is clear that, in the midst of draining and very difficult social settings and working with kids who face a litany of social and spiritual barriers, the intangible and on-going support of PLF staff members is critical to the vitality of youth workers like Bellante and Craig.

### **Mobilizing a Diverse Christian Church for Community Impact: City as Parish (CAP)**

In addition to equipping local churches and para-church agencies for effective outreach to youth, PLF is also active in connecting the many faces of the city-wide church for joint projects addressing urban challenges. It does this most visibly through City as Parish (CAP), an endeavor launched in 1999 in partnership with the Fresno Leadership Foundation and The Buford Foundation. Through City as Parish, PLF hopes to “unleash and reward the committed involvement of God's people and (to) connect them with the right community partners for integrated action and leveraged results.” After several efforts begun in the 1990s by others in the community (Pittsburgh 2000, Women of Pittsburgh 2000) to bridge racial barriers between pastors of urban and suburban churches, PLF decided to start in a small and more focused, sustainable manner.

Currently, the program focuses major training and organizing resources into 17 churches (five congregations were part of the 1999 pilot program) that are called “Mission Equippers.” These congregations agree to energize and train and, most of all, to connect their talented members into a network that can be called upon to respond to identified needs in the community. The churches agree to send their gifted parishioners out into the community to “spend” their gifts and talents, rather than to hoard them for single, intra-congregational use. Also, each member church pays \$1200 per year for network membership. The underlying thesis of the program is that by connecting with those from

other churches with similar talent, time and interests, resources are mobilized more effectively. In turn, the “one Christian Church” in greater Pittsburgh has increased impact on the area’s social and spiritual needs.

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Each class of “Mission Equippers” has an intentional mix; each must include churches from both urban and suburban locales, each must be inter-denominational, and each strives for racial and ethnic diversity within their network. City as Parish provides the oversight and training so critical to this type of cross-congregation partnership. Each group of Mission Equippers completes 50 hours of instruction led by CAP staff and PLF-connected teachers. The courses cover in-depth training on the concepts central to cross-congregational, frontline ministry. These sessions range from theoretical discussions of equipping to practical “how-to” sessions.

To date, via the 17 congregations, 6000 people are involved, seeking to discover their gifts and the mission that God has

called them to. Of these, 1200 confirm a specific sense of their mission and report having a clear focus for the carrying out of their call. Of the 1200, twenty percent are involved in ministry activities outside of their home church. CAP staff estimate that approximately 60 ministries or projects (not all faith-based) have been directly impacted by the influx of equipped lay people from CAP participating churches. In fact, of the current 17 participating churches, 13 Mission Equipper programs are led by lay people, rather than clergy (though under the direct authority of the senior pastor).

Marilyn Mulvihill, director of CAP since its inception, says:

*Church to church and people to people relationships start as a little flame. When two flames get together, passion grows and the bonfire begins to blaze. This is a process that must take its own course. You can't control it and you can't rush it.*

All 1300 congregations of Christian churches in the Pittsburgh area are part of the vision for PLF’s City as Parish program. CAP’s goal is to see 50 percent of



these congregations involved in the endeavor within the next 5-20 years. Perhaps closer to the heart of PLF's vision for a unified Christian church than any of its other ministries, CAP embodies many of the sustaining principles behind PLF's work. In this program, PLF displays the community-wide perspective so difficult for frontline ministries or local churches to maintain. Also, the intermediary—through its leadership role over CAP—is the only group with the time, interest, and capacity to invest regularly across congregations. That is the critical act necessary to achieve church equipping and community transformation.

PLF's "leadership from the side" (as one staff member calls it) can easily be seen in a program like CAP where the compelling idea of "city as parish" motivates, but where practical, detailed, sustaining leadership is needed in the intermediary's effort to avoid flare-out so common in well-intentioned but unsustainable cross-congregation efforts.

### **Broad-based Networking for Advocacy: CLEAR**

While much of the Pittsburgh Leadership Foundation's youth work is done within the context of local Christian congregations and its CAP program is designed specifically to initiate fundamental change within the Christian church, PLF does not lead only in Christian circles. As a faith-based intermediary, the Foundation is active in the secular marketplace, in diverse neighborhoods, and in the midst of nagging social problems. In fact, some of the Foundation's core efforts are designed specifically to impact the city outside church walls. Among them is CLEAR (Coalition for Leadership, Education and Advocacy for Recovery).

This issue-driven coalition of service providers, public health officials, criminal justice system leaders, advocates, and concerned citizens meets regularly to plan effective interventions for drug and alcohol addiction. PLF and Pittsburgh city leaders have identified addiction as a persistent underlying cause of many of the pernicious social problems facing greater Pittsburgh today. In fact, addiction to drugs and alcohol is what the Pittsburgh Leadership Foundation (citing the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation) calls "the nation's major social problem."

One of the PLF's earliest endeavors (started in 1978), CLEAR is an active coalition that reaches across many sectors and unites the faith sector with interested people from secular nonprofits, government, hospitals and business. As a result of the Foundation's leadership efforts, CLEAR claims to be the longest standing addictions network in the nation.

Describing their work as that of a “catalyst,” the Coalition has sparked many initiatives to lessen the effects of addiction on Western Pennsylvania. Working across sectors to emphasize addiction prevention, CLEAR provides training to treatment providers and to clergy, teaching them how to effectively respond to addicted members of the community. There are many community-based groups working in the prevention field, many of which look to CLEAR for support, leadership, and networking opportunities. There are CLEAR task groups that focus on educating the community, both in prevention and treatment, for the following groups: business, clergy, religious groups, counselors, psychologists, psychiatrists, schools, the criminal justice system, government representatives, the healthcare community, and the general public.

Some results of CLEAR’s networking and leadership for advocacy include:

- ❖ Helping parents form a support group to deal with teen drug abuse (POTADA).
- ❖ Encouraging local companies to institute Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs).
- ❖ Advocating and then facilitating the implementation of ARD—Accelerated Rehabilitation Disposition—a state sentencing statute that decriminalizes first-time drug offenders and offers them treatment as an alternative to incarceration.
- ❖ Developing the case statement for and helping to organize the first adolescent alcohol and other drug treatment program in the Pittsburgh area at St. Francis Hospital.
- ❖ Public Service Announcements attempting to drive home the immediacy and scope of addiction as a disease used the tag line: “Help someone you love.” They were seen widely across metropolitan Pittsburgh media.
- ❖ “Freedom Friday”—a city-wide, designated 24 hours free from drug and alcohol use—calling attention to addiction recovery programs and asking the community to support treatment and prevention programs financially and with their time.
- ❖ Public TV miniseries entitled “Chemical People” which earned Nancy Reagan’s involvement and national acclaim for its description of the addiction problem in Pittsburgh and its depiction of effective, hopeful interventions. During the showing of the series, CLEAR members staffed local phone-banks for people to call to get help.

Also, a partnership of treatment providers, government officials, and university researchers gather under the Foundation's *Tempering the Valley of Steel* (TVS) network to connect resources in the addictions field in the Mon Valley area. Begun in Monessen, McKeesport, and Aliquippa, the program receives most of its funding from the Center for Substance Abuse Programs—a federal grant which has helped it expand into the adjoining communities.

Recently, CLEAR has increased its advocacy, even to the national scene, where one of its efforts, *"Demand Treatment,"* calls for systematic change in the nation's health care policies. In this effort, CLEAR argues that the large disparity between treatment available for the rich (primarily longer-term treatment paid for by insurance plans) and for the poor (1-5 days in most communities) exacerbates many other social ills.

Efforts to impact these macro-level policies operate side-by-side with detailed research and technical assistance for a range of local treatment providers, both faith-based and secular. It is this sharing and leveraging of knowledge, expertise, and political capital that drives CLEAR to meet head-on this most complicated illness on behalf of the city's residents. CLEAR staff argue that much more effective advocacy is possible—both in Pittsburgh and on the state and national stage—when the variety of faith-based and secular practitioners speak about issues together, rather than through disparate voices focusing only on "their" piece of the larger issue. "A unified voice adds clout," reports Karen Plavin, fulltime consultant with CLEAR.

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### **Resourcing the Grassroots: Pittsburgh Community Storehouse**

In partnership with World Vision, one of the world's largest relief and development agencies, PLF has spearheaded efforts to recycle and redistribute physical items to a wide range of non-profits and churches. For a nominal membership fee of \$75 per year and a commitment of 12 volunteer hours per month, the Pittsburgh Community Storehouse grants member organizations full access to new

surplus goods it gleans from some of America's largest corporations.

Housed in a centrally located, new warehouse building comprising 10,000 square feet, the Community Storehouse embodies PLF's leveraging mission in a clear and very direct way. The model works by asking for agency buy-in at a relatively high level. The twelve monthly volunteer hours must be donated by appointment at the warehouse by a member (receiving) organization to the Storehouse before "shopping day"—the day on which member organizations gain access. Most (75 percent) of the goods are surplus supplies, equipment, and non-perishable food from World Vision's vast array of relief programs; the balance (25 percent) is cultivated, inventoried, and redistributed from local Pittsburgh businesses.

A modest cash budget (\$290,000) leverages over \$12 million of real property goods that are used in front-line ministry or social action in one of the 170 member organizations. Because the many member organizations are together required to donate more volunteer hours than are necessary to keep the warehouse itself operating, member organizations can donate volunteer time "laterally," that is, to approved "peer" agencies or causes besides the Community Storehouse. By giving time to another agency, the Storehouse member agency increases its network, learns about other efforts in the community and directly strengthens the "receiving" entity. This voluntary gift of time also increases "buy-in" for the Storehouse goods received and works to undercut any entitlement mentality.

Also, in this way, the value of the good (say a desk or office binders or window blinds or winter blankets) not only contributes to the member agency, but leverages additional volunteer commitment as well. Community Storehouse staff admit that the record-keeping for this type of intertwined web of hourly credits and donated goods is quite complicated and is their biggest operating challenge.

In all of these endeavors, even those operating explicitly outside of the Christian church, PLF leads with a distinctly Christian worldview and mission. But beneficiaries of the addiction coalition or the storehouse program may be secular social sector agencies.

### **Ministry Incubation**

The vision of Pittsburgh Leadership Foundation seems to be to not grow indefinitely, directly taking on all projects and formally addressing any problem directly through PLF structure. Rather, by investing in projects and organizations that are developing their own solutions, PLF has helped to birth and incubate many freestanding faith-based nonprofit organizations. PLF's investment in

these initiatives—more than \$30 million—has yielded, according to PLF, a return on investment of many hundreds of millions of dollars. PLF points out that the multiplied effect of this investment on the lives of persons served by these ministries is incalculable.

These are a few examples of ministries that started under the PLF umbrella, received technical assistance, leadership advising, and incubation funding:

- ❖ *Saltworks Theatre Company*—(created in 1981, freestanding FBO by 1986). Saltworks is a professional arts company that creates and performs dramatic works focusing on the spiritual lives of children.
- ❖ *Pittsburgh Coalition Against Pornography*—(created in 1982, freestanding FBO by 1989). This nonprofit was founded to protect human dignity and oppose those who exploit men, women, and children with pornography.
- ❖ *East Liberty Family Health Care Center*—(created in 1982, freestanding FBO that same year). This holistic clinic provides over 15,000 patient visits each year to residents of Pittsburgh's low-income neighborhoods.
- ❖ *Garfield Jubilee*—(created in 1983, freestanding FBO by 1990). This faith-based community development organization runs programs to benefit and stabilize welfare recipient families in the lower-income Garfield neighborhood of Pittsburgh.

PLF's ability to incubate visionary leaders during the difficult initial years of ministry has proven to be an effective piece of the intermediary's strategy. By identifying talented leaders and by connecting them early on to best practices, reliable volunteers, and good planning tools, PLF invests in more risky groups with short track records and little existing capacity, but with great potential. In fact, East Liberty Family Health Care Center—a large, freestanding health clinic that provides holistic health care to all patients regardless of their ability to pay—was nurtured through its formative years by staff from the Pittsburgh Leadership Foundation.

In 1981, not long after Pittsburgh native David Hall began his career in medicine, he and PLF's Reid Carpenter were introduced by a mutual friend who suspected that the two might have a common vision for meeting the physical and spiritual needs of Pittsburgh's poor. "Reid listened to me," Hall recalls, "and said there was a feeling in his bones that Pittsburgh was ripe for what I wanted to do."

In the following years, PLF backed up those words with action. Carpenter

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went to other cities with Dr. Hall to observe other medical doctors and similar clinics with the unique scope and vision for meeting the medical needs of underserved inner-city areas. When the Pittsburgh neighborhood of East Liberty was selected as the target site, Carpenter linked Hall with the Rev. Doug Dunderdale, then pastor of Eastminster Presbyterian Church, who desired to launch a health-care ministry there. Within months, PLF recruited Steve Paschall to do the administrative planning and to develop Hall's vision into a workable strategy. PLF funded Paschall for six months while the new organization was formally being created.

This early period of building organizational capacity is particularly important for an agency that has higher up-front costs (medical equipment, professional facilities, and salaries) than do some other fledgling community development organizations. The incubation period for a

highly specialized and well-run faith-based, community-centered organization like East Liberty Family Health Care Center is typically longer than the 12 months needed to birth this clinic. East Liberty staff point directly to the early involvement of PLF and the lending of PLF's expertise and community-wide connections in explaining the relatively rapid implementation of this vision into reality.

Today, the Health Care Center employs more than 30 medical personnel, including 13 doctors and close to 20 nurses, nurse practitioners, and physician's assistants. In 2000, the clinic added a dental clinic, delivered a record number of babies (63), and provided over 2,500 home visits to the homebound elderly. The clinic operates a pastoral counseling center, conducts medical outreach to the homeless and provides addiction recovery services to more than 100 neighborhood members struggling with drug or alcohol problems. Most significantly, during a time when the medical field is facing major problems with costs and struggling to develop policy and procedures that work for uninsured members of

a community, the East Liberty Family Health Care Clinic did not turn anyone away because of inadequate insurance or the inability to pay for care.

Tellingly, all three PLF connections that were so crucial to the incubation of East Liberty Health Care Center back in the early 1980s—neighborhood Presbyterian pastor Doug Dunderdale, planning expert Steve Paschall, and mentor Reid Carpenter—remain involved with the free-standing, faith-based organization twenty years later. All three still serve on the Health Care Center’s board of directors. Though it has been close to twenty years since the formal spin-off that resulted in East Liberty Health Care Center’s independence, a sustaining and meaningful connection remains with PLF.

### **Capacity Building: Training and PLF’s Value Added**

From its founding, PLF has been committed to being a broker, a bridge builder, and to building a “network of sharing” to give away its expertise and to nurture other organizations, both locally and nationally. It became a mecca for leaders in other communities who sought training and support in developing similar programs in other major cities in America. Reid Carpenter offered his staff and identified additional leaders in Pittsburgh who could teach, encourage, nurture, and connect nonprofit leaders structuring and organizing new visions, as well as help these visionaries with fundraising and “friendraising,” and with board and program development. Believing that a whole city needed to be involved, Carpenter encouraged people who were passionate about youth, the poor, and the vulnerable to bring a team to Pittsburgh: their Superintendent of Schools, police chief, pastors, public officials, entrepreneurs, and potential donors. There, the team could catch a vision and begin working together even before they returned to their respective cities.

In 1995, PLF formalized its training locally and nationally and hired John Stahl-Wert to direct the Pittsburgh Leadership Institute. Today under Lisa Thorpe-Vaughn, the Institute helps churches and nonprofit agencies in organizational development, capacity-building, resource development, and much more. It also serves as the training arm for the Council of Leadership Foundations. Thorpe-Vaughn notes:

*Sometimes, organizations just need someone to connect them to resources. They don’t know where to turn for advice and training. We link, nurture, support, encourage, and mentor them as they gain vision and capacity to carry out their respective missions. We are a teaching and equipping service for individuals, churches, and nonprofit agencies, wherever they are located.*

The Council of Leadership Foundations sponsors annual training conferences, educating and equipping leaders in their network as well as others throughout the country who are interested in honing their skills. Drawing 100-150 participants, the CLF offers workshops on best practices in everything from fundraising to prison ministry, mentoring at-risk youth, social entrepreneurship, and how to start ministries like City as Parish or Community Storehouses. Through this pooling of expertise from across the nation, leaders in other cities can tap into the expertise of their peers who have already had success with a model. The CLF also collaborates with the Christian Community Development Association to offer a track of training to leaders in the faith community from throughout the country at the annual CCDA conference.

Over the course of its 25 years of service to the greater Pittsburgh area, PLF has sponsored dozens of conferences, trainings, symposia, and special events for the city. Much of this work is aimed at impacting individual members of the Christian community, like a recent conference co-sponsored by the Buford Foundation and highlighting Buford's challenge to "half-timers"—successful business persons who, at middle age, can turn their talents to powerful use in the social sector, strengthening civil society. Frequent networking and training meetings take place in each of the ministry areas described earlier in this report. Addictions training for nonprofit and church staff through CLEAR, spiritual gift mapping and equipping through CAP, and pastoral continuing education through PYN are a few examples.

Occasionally, Pittsburgh Leadership Foundation sponsors larger citywide endeavors like prison outreach, evangelistic rallies, and gatherings for citywide worship. In all of this, PLF usually partners with other churches, nonprofits or FBOs; PLF involvement often matters a great deal. "When I get an invitation to something around town," says one long-time youth pastor, "I often see PLF listed down at the bottom. For me, that's kind of a 'Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval.' They've got their hand in a lot and it's usually really good."

### **Keys to PLF's Success**

PLF's successes thus far have rested in part on its core values (see sidebar) and in part on three additional key factors. The first is that *the history of the city and the timing of intermediary work have been important*. The geo-social history of the city of Pittsburgh is notable. PLF's impact has been fueled by demographic and economic trends taking place in Pittsburgh over the past five decades. PLF states, "The city is a complex organism, and the church is a many-dimensional resource."



## PLF's Core Values

- ❖ **We Value the City.** We value not only the persons of a city but the city itself, a place of refuge and grace for many. Structures that are efficient and just are gifts of common grace for all.
- ❖ **We Value the Vulnerable.** We care about the successful and the powerful in our cities, but in the Bible we also notice God's unrelenting concern for those who are poor, widowed, migrant, sick, in prison, alien, homeless or otherwise victimized. Cities have become the catch basin of those at-risk.
- ❖ **We Value Empowerment.** The biblical Gospel does not patronize but frees and empowers. We resist attempts to reduce the Gospel's significance to only personal piety or programs that keep people powerless or dependent.
- ❖ **We Value Reconciliation.** We strongly affirm this beautiful, old theological term, and are committed to partnership and networks in ministry. The Cross transcends race, gender, and denominations and the power of the Gospel is in linking arms rather than pointing fingers.
- ❖ **We Value Risk.** The exploding impact of the phenomenon of urbanization will require creative vision and bold initiative from individuals, churches and other institutions if renewal of persons and cities is to take place.
- ❖ **We Value Leadership.** We take leadership in urban life very seriously. As the best equipped and brightest seem to exit the city neighborhoods, the needs grow larger. Servant leadership on the part of the influential as well as the vulnerable is the leadership we wish to affirm and build — transformational leadership characterized by openness to change, personal growth and strong faith.

Situated along important waterways and adjacent to rich hinterlands, German, Irish, and Dutch immigrants from further east settled in the area to take jobs at the many factories that were the workshops of the industrial revolution. Steel and its associated industries fed the growth of the area and created comparatively great wealth. Educational and health systems grew up to support a growing middle and upper class. Wealthy industrialists like Andrew Carnegie invested in the civic, religious, and social life of the area in generous ways.

By 1960, however, the wealth created by Pittsburgh's single-dimension economy began to disappear. Weakness in the American automobile industry was a harbinger of urban decay and civic disinvestments in Pittsburgh that dominated the period 1950-1980. Misguided federal urban renewal strategies that blighted many eastern and mid-western cities hit the physical "place" of Pittsburgh particularly hard. Traditional neighborhoods were carved up by interstate highways and large pockets of subsidized housing projects replaced healthy neighborhoods.

In 1978 however, the year in which Reid Carpenter founded PLF, a secular civic renaissance was just beginning in Pittsburgh. Central-city areas were cleaned up. Federal investment was more wise and sensitive to neighborhood dynamics. The Pittsburgh economy had become more diversified. Also, by 1980 population gains had plateaued, making Pittsburgh one of the slower-growing cities in America; the place felt comparatively more like a small town than it had at the turn of the century, when it was one of America's 10 largest cities. The time was ripe, PLF staff argues, for spiritual transformation, a renaissance of the human spirit, to match the nascent physical renaissance.

The second is that *a familiarity with business principles and bias toward investment is necessary*. While PLF is fundamentally interested in relationships—the long-term, incarnational commitment to people and place, their leaders also emphasize terms like "return on investment," "rigorous research" and "design solutions." They are convinced that there is no fundamental conflict between day-long prayer sessions, followed by day-long sessions of strategy planning that would rival any of Pittsburgh's multi-national corporations in business acumen. Carpenter and PLF's current president, John Stahl-Wert, argue that the wise application of strong organizational skills to the business of transforming communities is the best way to achieve lasting and sustainable change. PLF's strategic plan argues:

*Financial, technical, managerial, and personnel resources are finite. To expend the same resources year after year re-fixing the same problem is poor investment policy and bad stewardship. Leaders who leverage their efforts*

*against more broadly available resources, and who empower those being served to create solutions, are the leaders of tomorrow.*

Increasingly, as competition for scarce resources gets more keen and as their role as a fledgling leadership foundation wanes after almost 25 years in business, PLF has moved more heavily into thorough evaluation of the programs under its umbrella and of the faith-based organizations in which it invests. Building capacity in the smaller FBOs by helping them to validate their results and equipping them to better tell their stories, this business mind-set is central to the vision of the future for PLF. Again, the strategic plan says it best:

*Demonstrate, validate, replicate: Leaders identify needs, design solutions, pilot new projects, and invite outside researchers to study and validate their results. Once this is accomplished, leaders do everything possible to allow others to copy their efforts and their success.*

The third is that *charismatic, lasting leadership with a “theology of place” is critical*. Sam Shoemaker’s charismatic and bold vision set the tone for strong leadership over PLF from the very beginning. A man deeply committed, over the long haul, to the *place* of Pittsburgh is really the only one who could have made such a bold statement and had it resonate deep within the workers still laboring toward the goal today. Making Pittsburgh as famous for God as it is for steel is quite a task—one that will require great sacrifice. That the vision still rings in the hearts of all of the PLF staff and board today is testament to Shoemaker’s charisma, first, and to his choice of successor, second.

Since the mid-1970s, Reid Carpenter has carried the mantle for this bold vision. A strong leader who has been described as bi-lingual (speaking fluently both the language of the streets and of corporate Pittsburgh), Carpenter has personally invested in the dream of transforming the city for close to 40 years. He is committed to what he calls the “theology of place,” a conviction that transforming change can occur in churches, neighborhoods, and societies once it takes place in the people of a certain area. He holds a definite bias toward long-term commitment and sustainability in ministry. Carpenter is a sharp and multi-talented leader, able to structure large teams of staff and stakeholders for common mission, able to understand investment and business principles and able to inspire congregations toward cultural engagement. He places great value on diversity, as reflected in his board and all his relationships.

After more than 25 years in formal leadership over PLF as its President and CEO, Reid Carpenter has recently led the intermediary through a crucial—and deliberate—leadership succession plan. Since 1998, Carpenter has equipped John Stahl-

Wert to take over upon Carpenter's formal retirement in 2003. Gradually increasing leadership responsibility, Stahl-Wert has discerned his commitment to the PLF and to the people of Pittsburgh who benefit from PLF's many programs and partnerships. Stahl-Wert's analysis of PLF's future identifies the need for growth in financial stability, disciplined pursuit and strengthening of core ministries, improved organizational structure, and attention toward strategic concerns related to national intermediary movements.

## **Pittsburgh and Beyond**

A heritage of servant leaders who consistently give away credit and who creatively see the big picture cannot be underestimated. In fact, the charisma of these leaders has attracted many other top people running the PLF ministries and serving on the PLF Board. Frontline ministries and networks directly benefit from strong talent at PLF—people who could easily succeed in other arenas but who are compelled by Shoemaker's vision and Carpenter's and Stahl-Wert's implementation over the past 25 years. As PLF materials argue, "The results of visionary and passionate work on behalf of a city and its people become clearer over time, through testing, and after many trials. Every city needs some leaders who will stay the course."

Building on their recognized success in Pittsburgh, Reid Carpenter and the board of PLF during the late 1980s committed to the establishment of a formal structure through which the Christian intermediary model could be replicated. Building on a network of informal but deeply meaningful personal relationships with like-minded civic leaders around the country, PLF donated significant staff time toward the creation of the Council of Leadership Foundations. In 1993, the Council was formed to strengthen the work of existing foundations and to respond to the rapidly growing number of inquiries from other cities wishing to establish similar foundations.

Each year since, Reid Carpenter, John Stahl-Wert, and other PLF staff have been some of the driving forces behind the work of the national Council. To date, the Council has formalized an accreditation process that recognizes the different stages and organizational maturities of groups in various cities. As of 2001, fourteen cities and regions have been recognized as "accredited." Another eight cities currently are "associate members" of the Council and are working toward accreditation. Leaders from twenty-four additional cities—what the Council calls "seeker cities"—have contacted the Council for technical assistance and organizational mentoring. In all, the twenty-one accredited and associate foundations have a combined staff of approximately 350 people and combined operating budgets of over \$21 million.

As the vision of PLF captures the hearts of community investors elsewhere around the nation, current PLF President Stahl-Wert underscores a vital piece of counsel. Despite PLF's tremendous success in connecting to macro-trends and national movements, Stahl-Wert argues that intermediaries such as PLF must work *locally* and *personally*. That is the critical factor for success. In Stahl-Wert's compelling articulation:

*While vision must be broad, passion for one's work must grow out of commitment to certain places and people. The leader who loves a particular city, a certain neighborhood, and who knows the individual faces of its people, is the leader who will remember the purpose of ministry.*

# case studies

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