



VIEWS & VISIONS

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Fifty Years of Service to the Community

Becky Cain Ceperley, President & Chief Executive Officer
The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation

Becky Cain Ceperley is the president and CEO of The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation in Charleston, West Virginia.

Ms. Ceperley is a past president of the League of Women Voters of the United States, where she was active in seeking congressional action on a broad range of public policy issues, including the fight for the passage of the National Voter Registration Act and campaign finance reform. In 1996, the *Ladies' Home Journal* named her one of the most powerful women in politics in the category of issues advocates and, in 2006, *West Virginia Executive* magazine named her as one of the 50 most powerful people in West Virginia. Following her tenure at the League of Women Voters, she worked to achieve campaign finance reform in Congress as the president of Campaign for America.

She has appeared on numerous national news programs, written for national publications and is a contributing columnist for *The Charleston Gazette*. She is a member of the steering committee of the Appalachia Funders Network and serves as the chair of both West Virginia Vision Shared and the Public Policy Committee of the West Virginia Grantmakers. Locally, she serves on the executive committee of the Council on Philanthropy.

A recipient of the Distinguished Alumni Award from the West Virginia University Political Science Department and the Eberly College of Arts and Science, Ms. Ceperley has also received Honorary Doctor of Law Degrees from Ripon College and the University of Charleston.

This year, 2012, marks the fiftieth anniversary of The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation. Fifty years of service to the greater Kanawha Valley, defined as Kanawha, Putnam, Boone, Clay, Lincoln and Fayette counties. Those 50 years have included opportunities and services for volunteerism, philanthropy, initiatives for change and civic engagement.

The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation is a “community foundation,” not only because of its service to community, but also by definition. A “community foundation” is a collaboration of diverse interests, organized for permanence, which attempts to strengthen a geographically defined community by providing services and nurturing leadership among charitable donors, non-profit organizations and the community at-large. No one person, family, business or group can control the governance or activities of a community foundation. The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation has over 500 separate charitable funds under its management. Each fund has its own donor, its own charitable purpose, and its own fund agreement. The asset size of the various funds range from a few thousand dollars to a few million dollars. The assets under management totaled approximately \$135 million at the end of 2010.

The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation’s role is to address large community issues that require the work of many public and private organizations and individuals to create a systems change or cultural shift that can have a measureable impact on life. We believe that no single organization can accomplish that goal by itself, but when organizations work together, the whole can be greater than its parts and real change can occur.



In addition to granting approximately \$90 million over the past 50 years to various nonprofit agencies serving those in need, as well as providing scholarships for students to attend college, The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation has been fortunate to have a cadre of donors who are informed, connected and skilled. These donors have reinforced the foundation’s values and culture and have encouraged the Foundation to take the lead on a variety of community issues, ranging from providing a safety net for basic human needs in a six county region, to facilitating community development on the East End of Charleston, to helping build facilities, such as the Schoenbaum Family Enrichment Center on Charleston’s “West Side,” and The Clay Center for the Arts and Sciences in downtown Charleston.

Community foundations are particularly suited to step into community leadership roles because the donors, volunteer board and staff have special insights into community issues



The Historic East End, Charleston, West Virginia

and take a long view of the community's well-being. The most effective leadership roles that community foundations can take involve change, such as: contributing ideas and information; fostering strategic connections; expanding resources devoted to change; leveraging systems change; and promoting performance. The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation has been pleased to have initiated a cross-sector partnership with the business community to work in a coordinated fashion to bring about growth and stability within our service area.

The Foundation serves many strong rural communities. Almost all of America's water and much of its food and fiber come from rural regions of the United States. For rural regions, like ours, we must support and promote new opportunities. Those opportunities, however, must be different than those of the past. We need to focus on constantly creating competitive advantage in new arenas, rather than simply protecting old advantages. We can no longer simply try to protect dominant enterprises that produce single commodities, often with federal and state government support

and protection. Often these enterprises increase the amount of wealth, but not the distribution of wealth.

The time is ripe for our community to **step up, think big, and lead on.** The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation is poised to join with other sectors of the community in undertaking the long-term process of social change. We know it is no longer enough to fund an innovative solution created by a single nonprofit or to build that organization's capacity. Instead, we must create and sustain a collective process that will enable cross-sector coalitions to arise and thrive. ♡

CONTRIBUTING TO THE VITALITY OF OUR COMMUNITIES



J. Thomas Lane
Charleston, WV

Tom is the president of the Charleston City Council, where he has served as an elected member since 1987, and the chairman of the Charleston Land Trust. He is a trustee and past president of the Energy and Mineral Law Foundation and a past president and executive council chairman of the West Virginia Bar Association. He is the 2012 recipient of the Servant Leader Award from the Charleston Area Alliance.



Tracey A. Rohrbaugh
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Tracey is the president of the Eastern Panhandle Bar Association and the immediate past president of the West Virginia Bar Foundation, Inc. She also is a board member of Horses With Hearts, a riding program for children with disabilities.