

from the Board Chair

I can't help but think that our founder, Sebastian Kresge, would be proud of where we are right now. The trustees and staff of this 86-year-old institution are diligently interpreting his intent—to promote human progress—just as I believe he would have wanted, and understood was required, within the context of our present world.

It could have been a different story. Here we were, a national foundation on the cusp of an unprecedented evolution to fundamentally expand our grantmaking when the economy nearly collapsed. It was a universal experience, and an especially personal one for the 14-million individuals who were out of work and suddenly in need of services they had never had to depend upon before. Everyone was called to respond. What differentiates us, individuals and organizations alike, is our ability and our will to do so.

What we did and why we did it

I believe a philanthropic organization of Kresge's size and scope cannot shy away from taking bold action in a time of great national hardship. We did not. My fellow trustees, our CEO Rip Rapson, and our staff agreed that we would respond with precise and immediate aid to those most urgently in need. And, we would do so while we completed the institutional transformation already underway at The Kresge Foundation. Our commitment to continuing our programmatic expansion was steadfast. We were convinced that if we were strategically focused and more flexible in our funding methods we would be better able to help the nonprofit sector face the long-term implications of the economic upheaval.

And thus 2009 became the year of dual imperatives. Some might say it created the most challenging year in memory. Our organization, while clearly tested, demonstrated the mettle necessary to execute on crucial short and long-term agendas. The economic crisis checked the integrity of our values too. We crafted these principles in robust times, and they proved to be a guiding light during a very dark hour.

Our primary response to the economic crisis was to bolster organizations with a proven track record of providing food, shelter and emergency assistance through grants and program-related investments. These safety-net organizations needed reinforcements if they were to serve the newly displaced while meeting the needs of their large, existing clientele—the chronically poor and disadvantaged, a segment of our society that is disproportionately children.

Getting it right

Throughout the past year, so many worthy organizations met the uncharted demands of the Great Recession while doing their utmost to survive themselves. In many cases we were their first line of defense; it is a role we knew was ours to fulfill.

The decision to simultaneously proceed with the strategic expansion of our programs was to us a given as well. The beauty of being a large, national foundation is that we can take the long view and challenge ourselves to make a meaningful dent in society's greatest ills. **When the economic crisis finally subsides, you will find us already at work addressing some of society's most entrenched and confounding problems.**

This is our role, our reason for being. We exist to help, to be impactful. We exist to do good. We exist to take one step at a time and to get it right, all within the context of our values.

That is where Sebastian Kresge comes in. We wholeheartedly subscribe to our founder's wishes to promote human progress. Yet as a board and staff it is our responsibility to interpret his maxim and to take the organization where it needs to go to be relevant in the 21st century. You will see our relevancy play out again and again as you read descriptions of each of the 404 grants we made in 2009. That is why he would be proud.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'E. Rosen'.

Elaine D. Rosen

Chair, The Kresge Foundation

Board of Trustees