

From the Desk of

THE JUNIOR BOARD, FRIEDA C. FOX FAMILY FOUNDATION, STUDIO CITY, CA

Earlier this year, four young ASF members from the Frieda C. Fox Family Foundation wrote about the best parts of participating on their foundation's junior board.

Kylie, age 9, writes: Last year was such a great year. The board approved my grant request for Project HELP, and I presented a session called "Youth on Board" at the ASF National Conference. I was the youngest person to present at the conference. I got to answer questions and even get interviewed afterwards. Someone asked if it is OK for all ages to be on a board. We said that kids should be at least 6 years old, because younger kids probably wouldn't understand this all! I loved giving advice and ideas to some of the grownups at the session. I feel that we helped them understand it is possible for even young kids to do philanthropy, understand about grants, and be involved in their family's foundation.



Jamie, age 13, writes: Site visits are by far one of the best parts of being on the junior board. My family and I took a tour through the amazing headquarters for No Limits in Los Angeles and learned how deaf children could hear with new hearing aids and perform in theater productions. I have a personal interest in drama and theater, so this program was really interesting to me. My sister and I had so much fun in their various theater sets and classrooms that I knew it would be a great place to learn. Doing a site visit to No Limits made me more aware of the difficulties children have and how I can help out. I am so excited now, researching other nonprofits on the Web and making plans for my next grant request.

Katie, age 14, writes: Seeing how my grants help is my favorite part of the junior board. On all of my grants, I have visited the organization, received statistics, and met with staff so I see how the grant money helps make a difference. My recent grant to Parents Helping Parents, an organization that helps special needs kids, was specifically for their iTECH center that is filled with advanced technology for children with learning disabilities. My next favorite part is participating in foundation board meetings. I have participated every year since I was 7. Every time the foundation meets, the junior board attends to learn how foundations work by observing and listening, while adding our opinions into the discussion. Now believe me, board meetings are not all glamorous! But I learn a great deal, including that there is a lot of hard work that goes into running a foundation.

Grace, age 16, writes: I have heard people say that numbers speak for themselves, but I'm finding that the problems of the world cannot be reduced to numbers. Philanthropy introduced me to a girl who lives just a half-hour from me. We met during a site visit, and we started talking while loading our plates with chocolate-covered strawberries and sushi. We are both debaters, the same age, and like the same foods. But our lives have been different in ways that I can't even imagine. I have been blessed with opportunity, while her high school didn't have a debate team before this year. I am honored to have had a hand in starting the team at her school, through a grant to the National Association of Urban Debate Leagues. My grant goes to improving literacy and graduation rates, but philanthropy is not just an opportunity to improve numbers. It's an opportunity to help real people, with their own personalities, ambitions, and dreams.



Involve Children and Teens in Your Foundation

Our thanks to Ingrid Fox, advisor to the junior board of the Frieda C. Fox Family Foundation, for compiling the ideas below. Ingrid has attended family foundation meetings since they began and joined the foundation's board in 2005 at age 19. In 2006, she assumed the role of advisor to the junior board. This summer, Ingrid will join the faculty of our Multi-Generational Family Retreat.

Invite Them to Board Meetings

Make younger family members feel like part of the group by inviting them to see how the foundation works. Keep in mind that board meetings can be tedious for some kids, especially younger ones. They don't necessarily have to sit through every minute of every meeting, but make them feel like they are a welcome part of the process. Let them get a sense of what philanthropy means to your family.

Take Them on Site Visits

Many kids are excited to see the tangible results of their family's philanthropy. This is often their favorite part! Site visits make philanthropy real and can pique their interest around involvement in the foundation.

Make It Official

Have your board discuss and draft a junior board policy with goals, procedures, eligibility, and members' rights and responsibilities. Have regular meetings of the junior board facilitated by an adult but run by the members. (It can help to have an active adult member of the foundation serve as an advisor to the junior board.) This will familiarize the kids with the philanthropic process, groom them for future "big board" service, and show them just how important their involvement is to the board.

Keep in Touch

In-person meetings are ideal, but if you can't meet in person, use the phone or Internet to connect the kids in your family. (If you aren't sure where to start, ask them!) Also be sure to check periodically on how things are going. Do they have any questions? Are they having fun?

Keep It Simple

The kids in your family will surprise you with their ability to grasp concepts, but it's equally important that the process be accessible. Be sure to consider your foundation's circumstances and the ages of the kids involved.

Allow Them to Make It Their Own

Give the kids a sense of ownership. Guide them through the process of participating rather than tell them exactly what to do. This will make them feel empowered, confident, and capable, and give them valuable skills they'll use as adult philanthropists.

Make It Relatable

No matter your foundation's focus, there are always ways for younger family members to make a personal connection to grantmaking—the most effective way to keep anyone involved! Ask the kids what issues interest them.

Make It Fun

To maintain high involvement, keep it fun! If there are lots of kids in your family, encourage them to work together, collaborate, and share ideas. Have meetings at fun places like ice cream shops, or follow meetings with family outings to museums or parks.