

Women in Leadership Seminar Highlights October 24, 2008



Alicia Philipp

“Changing Communities Through Purposeful and Dynamic Connection” featuring Alicia Philipp, President - Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta, one of the largest philanthropic service organizations in the country. TCF connects donors, nonprofits, & community leaders to make philanthropy happen. Alicia has received many honors including being named one of the “100 Most Influential Atlantans;” recipient of the Atlanta Women’s Foundation’s “Shining Star Award” for 2008; and Turknett’s 2007-2008 “Leadership Character Award” for nonprofits. She has led TCF for over 30 years, growing it from \$7M to nearly \$800M in assets with more than 600 donors. In 2007 along with Mayor Franklin, Alicia is credited and highly praised for taking on the complex, last minute project of acquiring the King Collection for our city. Always humble, she’s a tireless “SHEro.”

Did you know? Atlanta has more nonprofit organizations per capital than any other city in the US.

- Alicia Philipp thinks she has the best job in the world; constant change, never the same. When she started, being young and female was a challenge, but she had mentors who shared their credibility with her as she earned her own.
- Another challenge – as for many women – trying to juggle work and a family including a daughter and a son.
- How does recession impact TCF? Typically individual donations stay constant (from wealthy donors) but government funding decreases. In 2008, already some nonprofits have had their government funding reduced by 40% at the same time the need is UP and they are seeing more clients than ever. There will be some nonprofits that do not make it through this recession, survival of the fittest, probably.
- Where should you focus your giving with so many nonprofits available? Her answer is “to follow your passion.” Would like to see more “raging philanthropists” and less consumption. For many people, philanthropy becomes part of who you are, a part of your story, how you make a difference.
- For TCF, they are not interested in the WHAT as much as the HOW of a nonprofit. E.G. how they go about advancing the public will and engaging the common good.

- There is a significant link between nonprofits and public policy. You take what you learn and try to make things better. One example: A group of foster children got together and lobbied the legislature to raise the age of healthcare coverage so they wouldn't lose it at 18. They were successful in getting the law changed for Medicaid in GA!
- The relationship of TCF and United Way – UW raises some \$80M+ every year and in turn distributes the funds to support various agencies. Donations are from companies, employees etc. TCF is more of a “big savings” account of \$800M with the money coming from private citizens, wealthy people, etc. TCF helps them become “raging philanthropists.” TCF and UW often collaborate on projects, e.g., HIV, Homelessness, etc.
- Re Philanthropy – a few years ago many people didn't even know what it meant, now it's written about and talked about everywhere. People like Bill and Melinda Gates, Warren Buffet and other very wealthy and very well-known people have helped to move it into the public consciousness.
- Ways to help kids get involved at an early age – Planet Philanthropy, Hands on Atlanta, etc.
- What has Alicia learned about leadership over the years? The importance of being a life long learner, reading and gaining knowledge about a wide variety of topics in order to understand people who think, act, and look different. Loves “new knowledge.” Also, she tries to “go where people do not expect me to go” – rather than to all of the black tie events she could go to. Stretches herself in this way, and meets many interesting people from across the community, state, etc.
- One final take-away: Alicia believes that nonprofits have a lot to teach the corporate sector about leadership!
- What's ahead for Alicia Philipp? She wants people to know she's very happy where she is now, but could the Peace Corps be in her future? She's working on her Spanish AND getting in shape – just in case – by preparing for an “Iron Girl” competition.

COMMENT: No doubt, she has a lot more to offer Atlanta and in fact the world.