

TFI UPDATE



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I N C U B A T O R

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One-on-One Learning – COACHING HELPS MEMBERS GROW

When Karen Herzog and Richard Sachs' daughter, Sophia, was born with Niemann-Pick Type A, a rare cell metabolism disorder, doctors predicted she would live only two or three years. While the family struggled with their emotional devastation and a healthcare system unprepared to deal with the disease, they received an outpouring of support. To give back to their loved ones and to families in similar situations, the couple established Sophia's Garden Foundation, named for the garden that neighbors and friends planted on Sophia's first birthday.

Herzog and Sachs worked primarily in the for-profit world, so they sought assistance from The Foundation Incubator. Their first coaching session, to lay the groundwork for their new endeavor and to craft a mission, vision, and values, was held with TFI's President Liz Bremner and Vice President Eleanor Clement Glass.

"We brainstormed," Herzog remembers. "We wrote on white boards. It was a very dynamic exchange."

Within a few hours, they had completed a draft. Several e-mail exchanges later, their statements

were complete. TFI staff then provided referrals to professionals who could help them determine how to structure their organization. "Before we made any decisions, they wanted to make sure that we surveyed the field of philanthropy," Herzog says.

In ensuing coaching sessions, the couple learned how to apply for tax-exempt status, develop a board and staff, and articulate their unique niche.

Another TFI coaching participant, Magdalena Paul of The Barrett Foundation, sought the Incubator's help as a sounding board and a place to hone her skills.

"When I bring Eleanor the issues we're grappling with, she's able to give examples from her own background and from what she's observed in others' work," Paul maintains. "It's not just a theoretical discussion. I come away with a concrete plan."

In her one-on-one meetings with Clement Glass, Paul has refined her foundation's vision, clarified its five funding priorities, and created an evaluation tool to measure its success.

Paul and Herzog are two of dozens of TFI members who take advantage of coaching and mentoring offered by the Incubator to build their organization's infrastructure and mature as professionals.

"Liz and Eleanor were inspiring to us at a time when we were feeling overwhelmed by our personal circumstances," Herzog reflects. "It was wonderful to know of a like-minded community we could go to for information and support and to realize it was a learning and growing process."

In May, the fourth planting of Sophia's Garden took place as Herzog and Sachs' daughter turned 4. Although still in fragile health, she has outlived the doctors' predictions. "Sophia has taught us to move through challenges gracefully and to appreciate how to receive and give," Herzog maintains. "To me, this is the true nature of philanthropy."



Karen Herzog, Richard Sachs and family, Sophia's Garden Foundation

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