

# Steward for the Community

**Former college president continues to make local impact with new position**

Never one to sit idle for long, Dr. Valerie Hepburn, who retired as president of the College of Coastal Georgia a little more than a year ago, has taken the helm at the Communities of Coastal Foundation.

Once its former executive director, Lee Hiers Owen, announced her retirement, Hepburn began to gradually transition into her new role by observing the organization's board of directors and getting a sense of their priorities by sitting in at their meetings.

"Attending meetings isn't everything, but it gives you a sense of what is happening," she said.

Hepburn says she is excited about her new venture because philanthropic organizations such as the community foundation can "change the culture and viability of a community."

However, she admits she's still learning.

"The first 90 days on the job is mostly listening," she said.

Currently Hepburn is working with the board to determine what the foundation's priorities are and where the focus needs to be.

Community foundations are significantly different than private foundations or traditional nonprofit groups. In fact, a community foundation is a hybrid. While the financial base of a private foundation comes from a single source, the community foundation gets its support from an array of donors including individuals and corporations.

And, the focus of a community foundation is different. Where most nonprofits focus on a single issue or specific area of interest, the community foundation works to support



the well-being of the total community.

In fact, Hepburn says donors support a wide range of interests including education, animal welfare, the county library, arts and culture, crisis intervention, the environment, workforce development, economic development, history and historic preservation and faith-based interests.

Community foundations have several roles, including being builders and caretakers of community resources, providing services to donors, being grant makers and catalysts for change within the community.

One such example is its Early Childhood Literacy Initiative, which began several years ago.

"We saw the need; it was a way to teach the community about what community foundations did, and a tangible way to engage

volunteers," Hepburn said.

Education is one of the many areas that need attention in the community, she said, and it is one of the areas in which people can help.

That initiative took off, and Hepburn attributes its success to one specific thing.

"It's the incredible generosity of this community and its can-do attitude," Hepburn said. "So many people, including retirees are willing to bring their time, talent and resources to the table."

These days, the community foundation no longer operates the Early Childhood Literacy Initiative, but continues to financially support it.

"Our role was project development, to be a catalyst and find a home for it," she said. "Our goal is to foster independence, not encourage dependence."

That's exactly what is supposed to happen – community foundations are primarily grant makers not direct service providers and promote self-sufficiency.

The money in a community foundation comes from private donors who, in most cases, set up their own funds under the auspices of the foundation.

"Community foundations offer people an opportunity to get tax advantages and fulfill their desire to help with philanthropy and community development," she said.

Although community foundations exist throughout the country and have similar ideals in common, they also vary widely.

"That's the fun of a community foundation," Hepburn explained. "It can take the shape of its donors."

One unique feature of community foundations is



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CCGF Glynn County Board Members pictured L-R: Mark Bodner, Diana Murphy, Alfred Sams III, Jeanne Manning, Bernard M. Cloud, Mike Mahy and Rees Sumerford. Members not pictured: Claude Booker, Martha Ellis, Ellen Fleming, Diane Lawu, Art Lucas, Bonney Shuman and Bill Stembler

the way in which they solicit donors. Whereas most other public charities target small annual gifts from the public, community foundations seek support through individual gifts in the form of substantial lifetime gifts or bequests.

Then, when it releases funds into the community, the process is a bit different as well. There are discretionary and donors' grants that target a specific area of interest, then there are initiatives to which the foundation as a whole makes a donation, as in the previously mentioned Early Childhood Literacy Initiative.

What community foundations do, she said, is not charity, rather, it is "strategic philanthropy."

"It begins a process, and it doesn't stop with the donation," said Hepburn. "We provide ancillary help to other organizations and work together on similar projects and initiatives."

Hepburn explained that the community foundation is a cross-cutting agency that sees itself as a complement and a conduit to other organizations.

"You give through us, not to us," she said.

And as with all worthwhile efforts, the sum is greater than the whole of its parts.

"It's a way to touch a lot of pieces," she said. "We can harness resources and be game-changers."

- Mary Starr

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### 2014 WORKSHOPS

September 22 - 23, 2014	<b>Diane Fraser</b>	New to Oils, Part 1	\$ 250.
September 29 - October 2, 2014	<b>Larry Moore</b>	Plein Air - Golden Isles	\$ 400.
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January 22 - 24, 2015	<b>Dee Beard Dean</b>	Studio Landscape	\$ 450.
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## Dine Out For Kids to be held Aug. 21-24

Dine Out For Kids, an annual event that benefits Communities in Schools of Glynn County (CIS), will be held Aug. 21 - 24 at a number of area restaurants.

"It's easy to participate in Dine Out For Kids," said CIS Board of Directors Chairman Brent Barbee of Joseph David Advertising. "Just pick one or several of the participating restaurants and dine out for any meal. A percentage of your meal will help fund Communities in Schools programs."

Communities in Schools of Glynn champions the connection of needed community resources within schools to help at-risk students successfully learn, stay in school and prepare for life. CIS programs are currently being implemented in Brunswick High School, Glynn Academy and Glynn Middle School, and the organization also partners with organizations including the United Way of Coastal Georgia, Boys and Girls Clubs of Southeast Georgia and Family Connection Glynn to provide services to Glynn County students.

"Communities in Schools has had a tremendous impact within our schools and has helped us to raise our graduation rate substantially over the last few years," said Glynn County Schools Superintendent Howard Mann. "I fully support CIS and its programs, and urge our community to do so as well by dining out at participating restaurants during Dine Out For Kids."

Participating restaurants include - Coastal Kitchen and Raw Bar, Chick-fil-A, Crabdaddy's Seafood Grill, Nazzaro's Italian Cuisine, ECHO Oceanfront Restaurant and Bar, Halyards, Tramicci Neighborhood Italian Restaurant, Frederica House, The Market at Sea Island, Gnat's Landing, Locos Grill and Pub, Brogen's North, Southern Soul Barbecue and Fuse Frozen Yogurt, all on St. Simons Island; and Indigo Coastal Shanty and Southeast Georgia Health System - Morrison's, both in Brunswick.

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