



LEADERSHIP PROFILE



CEO Danville Regional Foundation Danville, VA

The Danville Regional Foundation is methodically changing this region.

--Editorial, Danville Register & Bee, September 18, 2018

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

[Danville Regional Foundation](#) (DRF) was established in 2005 with an initial corpus of approximately \$200 million derived from the sale of the local nonprofit hospital. Over the intervening years, DRF has become a health legacy foundation that truly deserves to be called transformational.

Under the leadership of CEO Karl Stauber and a board of deeply committed citizen leaders, the foundation has consistently embraced a long-term focus on the economic and cultural transformation of the region in ways that grow prosperity for all. Essentially all the foundation's grants have been designed to contribute to the revitalization of a region deeply impacted by job loss, economic instability and declining self-esteem.¹

Today, the region served by the foundation – an area including the [City of Danville](#), [Pittsylvania County](#) (geographically, Virginia's largest) and neighboring [Caswell](#)

¹ For example, in 1970 the median household income in Danville and surrounding counties was close to the average for the rest of the state of Virginia. By 2015, Danville's median household income was just half the state average.

Finding leaders that matter for missions that matter®

[County](#), North Carolina – is living testament to the power of creative philanthropy, determined leadership, and a sustained commitment to community progress. Very real problems remain, to be sure, but change is evident throughout the region.

With foundation support, for example,

- In September 2015, the [Danville Family YMCA](#) [photo at right] occupied the city’s first new building to face the riverfront in over a hundred years. Named one of the “top 10 recreation facilities in the world” by *Athletic Business* magazine, the Y’s facility is both evidence of and contributor to the area’s thriving [River District](#).
- The [Capstone Integrated Machining Technology Program](#) at the Gene Haas Center of the [Institute for Advanced Learning & Research](#) offers specialized



Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe at the opening of precision machining facilities at Danville’s George Washington High School

third-year advanced manufacturing training and work experience for community college students, capping a program that starts at the high school level. A multifaceted partnership of [Danville Community College](#), the Danville School Board, and local corporations and philanthropists (including DRF), the Capstone program is just one example of the area’s flourishing workforce development initiatives.

- [The Health Collaborative](#) is a cross-sector group of organizations and residents working together to improve the health and well-being of the Dan River Region. The group’s [dashboards](#) provide interesting context for area gains in active living, healthy eating, health spaces and capacity-building.
- DRF’s annual [Regional Report Card](#) highlights progress—or lack thereof—in several key areas of collective interest across the region. The report card tracks contributing conditions, not just symptoms, to help “spark different and more significant conversation[s] within the community.”

This past August, Karl Stauber announced his intention to retire as CEO by August 2019 after what will have been a dozen years at DRF’s helm. During his tenure, the foundation has invested nearly \$100 million in support of area nonprofits and initiatives. With a corpus now at \$230 million and a region readier than ever to realize its full potential, DRF is exceptionally well positioned to continue its role as catalytic partner and “*Bridge to the Future.*”

The present Leadership Profile summarizes the DRF Board’s executive search mandate. The profile results from discussions with the foundation’s Board and staff; a cross-section of leaders of various nonprofit, civic, academic and corporate stakeholders in the service area; and a number of trusted advisors deeply familiar with the foundation and the Dan River Region.

THE ORGANIZATION

The Danville Regional Foundation is the largest grantmaking organization in the Dan River region, and its impact has been pervasive. Today, the foundation is widely regarded as an engine for change and a source of support for sustainable, impactful initiatives and services that have the potential to lift up the entire community.

DRF’s core focus areas are Education, Economic Development, Health & Wellness, and Community Development. None of these exists in a vacuum, of course, and many of the foundation’s most gratifying grants have impact well beyond one focus area. About half of DRF’s annual grantmaking is made in response to unsolicited requests, and about half is initiated by the foundation in support of strategic priorities. All DRF grants are made based on three criteria: need, opportunity, and impact.

Central to the foundation’s success has been the foresight of the founding board to focus on philanthropy rather than charity by pursuing solutions rather than addressing symptoms. As a result, DRF has never been about meeting one-time needs, pressing though they might be. Rather, the foundation employs the longer perspective required for systemic change. That said, DRF is rightly proud of its “Make It Happen” and “Make More Happen” initiatives, whereby the foundation



has awarded well over a hundred smaller grants to support grassroots projects—a community garden here, a public playground there—that create bright spots of progress and expand community ownership of that progress.²

As an endowed foundation, DRF can take risks that others might avoid. Not every grant or initiative is a smashing success, and the region’s residents face many challenges and disparities in education, health and economic opportunity. In the main, however, the investments DRF has made have been bold, consequential and productive, cooperating with local partners to help “build a new economy that benefits a growing portion of the community, even as it has started to create a new culture that supports opportunity for all.”³

There are numerous instances of the momentum created or supported by the foundation’s involvement. For example,



- With substantial support from the City of Danville and the private sector, the rebranded [River District](#) in downtown Danville has helped revitalize a moribund area and sparked an increase in residents’ enjoyment and in commercial housing downtown. As one observer noted, “I underestimated the power of the River District renewal until I saw how outsiders responded—and how critical it has become to our ability to attract newcomers.”
- DRF and such partners as [The Launch Place](#) have facilitated 15 significant investments to help smaller hi-tech firms choose the Dan River region for their start-ups.
- The foundation is itself a learning organization, and it regularly seeks or creates opportunities to learn from the experiences of others. The board, staff and government representatives have made multiday visits to several dynamic cities, most recently Chattanooga, TN to hear from leaders on the ground in other contexts.
- At home, DRF has employed over 100 interns⁴ and fellows, and it has partnered with Duke University in providing leadership development for over 500 area leaders from nonprofit and government agencies.

² For a fuller summary of DRF’s philosophy of philanthropy, see “Challenging Culture to Change Culture” in [“Philanthropy as the South’s Passing Gear,”](#) pp 78-80

³ From Karl Stauber’s retirement announcement, August 17, 2018

⁴ Click [here](#) for an overview of the 2018 intern project

The Danville Regional Foundation is governed by a volunteer board comprising civic, business, academic and philanthropic leaders from throughout the region.⁵ The board is a true *governing* board, and respect for a healthy board/CEO dynamic is both deep and mutual.

The full-time staff of ten and the foundation's Fellows are highly regarded for their expertise, commitment and passion for progress. The staff is accustomed to an empowering leader for whom inclusivity is a core value.

Additional information on the Danville Regional Foundation, including financial reports and a comprehensive list of grants and grantees, is available [here](#).

THE OPPORTUNITY

**Some people are looking for case studies. I want us
to *be* the case study!**

--Leader of a DRF grantee organization

Like the aspirational executive director cited in the quote above, Danville Regional Foundation has already established itself, within its community and among its grantmaking peers, as a beacon of excellence, a collaborative partner and a thoughtful friend. Under the founding CEO's leadership, DRF has earned respect for the intentionality behind its strategy, and the fruit being generated by seeds planted three, five and ten years ago provides increasing evidence that the foundation and its partners have made many wise choices.



The Danville-based Institute for Advanced Learning & Research, "a regional catalyst for economic transformation"

As the foundation nears the end of what the incumbent CEO calls the "first third of a long developmental arch," the Board's commitment to the current strategy is solid, even as that strategy continues to evolve. With this leadership transition, the foundation is entering a new phase.

There will always be programmatic challenges in a grantmaking foundation, but DRF is well equipped to address most of them. The bigger challenge may be a direct function of its own success: As the community continues to embrace DRF's

⁵ DRF's by-laws provide for a minimum of nine directors and a maximum of eleven.

strategic approach to philanthropy, the opportunities for impact will continue to grow, and so will the quality of proposals to be considered.

Since the foundation’s financial resources are finite, that means DRF will face increasingly tough choices. Already exceptionally thoughtful in its approach, DRF must become even more thoughtful—not to say cautious—about placing bigger bets, willing to address its own capabilities and constraints if it is to continue its role as critical catalyst for the broader community. The CEO will be expected to bring a new perspective to such questions, helping board and staff re-examine the current dynamic (how we do what we do), and taking calculated risks in support of an overarching vision.

Five years out, DRF envisions a variety of success markers as it continues to explore how best to provide opportunity for more people while focusing on initiatives with the most promise. Some sample aspirations:

- A vibrant River District whose success continues to make the region inviting for residents, employers and visitors
- A prospering manufacturing base (an historical strength of the region) that leverages current investments in robotics, precision machining and workforce development—with successes replicated in other fields, such as nursing and information technology
- Expanded opportunity for youth and the community at large from investments in early childhood, K-12, higher education and workforce development
- Stronger, more empowered neighborhoods contributing to an improved quality of life, especially in three specific neighborhoods in the DRF-designated Opportunity Corridor
- Continued investments in the built environment
- Improved access to healthcare and improved health outcomes across the foundation’s footprint.

THE RELATIONSHIPS

The CEO reports to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Danville Regional Foundation Board of Directors
And manages a staff, currently ten, through four direct reports:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VP of Programs • Chief Financial Officer • Director of Marketing and Communications • Executive Assistant

While stewarding other important relationships, many of them overlapping, such as	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• City, county and statewide leaders, both appointed and elected• Co-funders and co-investors in community initiatives• Grantees and nonprofit partners• Community stakeholders with shared interests in DRF’s work, its impact or its constituencies• Philanthropic leaders in other communities• DRF’s consultants, program advisors and investment managers• The foundation’s Fellows and interns
--	--

THE LOCATION

The Danville Regional Foundation serves the Dan River Region, which encompasses the City of Danville and both Pittsylvania County, Virginia and Caswell County, North Carolina. DRF’s partnerships impact the region’s approximately 125,000 residents.

Danville enjoys a beautiful setting along the Dan River, about an hour’s drive from Greensboro and Raleigh-Durham, NC and a similar distance from Lynchburg, VA.



The Dan River Region is known for its wealth of outdoor pursuits including hiking, mountain biking (the best in the state) and watersports. While Raleigh-Durham and Greensboro provide the region with a host of metropolitan amenities, Danville is a thriving community that combines the charms and challenges of a community in the midst of revitalization with an openness to newcomers.

THE CANDIDATE

The next CEO of the Danville Regional Foundation will be an experienced community leader broadly steeped in guiding collaborative efforts addressing tough issues across diverse communities of interest. The search committee is

It’s not where you come from, it’s what you do here that matters.

--A local leader’s reflection on DRF’s CEO transition

open to considering a variety of career paths, but a candidate's successful leadership experience in a sophisticated place-based grantmaking foundation or a significant, multifaceted nonprofit will be of particular interest.

Experience and expertise: Among the traits being sought, DRF expects to hire...

- A board-savvy leader of unfailing integrity who is experienced in guiding transformational community efforts
- An executive with solid knowledge of how a foundation works, especially one with a proactive approach to grantmaking
- A visionary who models the power of collaboration and inclusion while remaining committed to solutions and implementation
- A leader with working knowledge of economic development
- A person who balances a long view of success with a sense of urgency about the work at hand
- An effective steward of the foundation's resources; a CEO with the financial savviness to oversee DRF's finances and to anticipate the implications of its commitments
- A CEO able to engage the board and the foundation's partners in tough conversations with grace and respect
- A natural collaborator who knows when to lead and how to follow
- A respectful, empowering executive with the confidence to lead a team of smart, independent-minded colleagues accustomed to transparency and candor in their dealings with one another and the community at large
- A broad-based general manager—financially literate, intellectually astute, culturally attuned
- An innovative thinker who can energize support for shared strategic goals and ensure the operational impetus to achieve them
- A compelling communicator—direct, clear, impactful—who builds enduring relationships.



Culture: DRF's CEO should exemplify...

- A courageous and resilient consensus-builder who understands the power of persistence and continuity; someone who leads with a light hand but knows when and how to take a stand

- An abiding commitment to community, made evident by actions in *this* community (as foundation CEO and engaged resident)
- Empathy derived from experience with adversity and disappointment over the natural cycles inherent in long-term commitments
- A culture of curiosity; a creative, compassionate and empowering grantmaker who derives joy from the community's progress
- An engaged citizen-leader who does not confuse popularity with effectiveness while building the bridges necessary for success
- An approachable management style; a nurturing boss who raises up team members and supports their growth
- A personal style of confident humility; someone innately comfortable sharing the credit and letting the work largely speak for itself
- A thought partner with deep-seated passion for the foundation's work and the communities it serves
- A patient executive willing to invest the time to understand "who we are, where we are, how we got here and where we ought to be going."

For potential consideration or to suggest a prospect, please email

DRF@BoardWalkConsulting.com

**or call Sam Pettway or Laura Lovelace
at 404-BoardWalk (404-262-7392).**

For additional information on our firm, please visit

BoardWalkConsulting.com.

