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I have been in the theater since I was seven years old, so the fact that I am now the Artistic Director of a theater company should be no surprise to anyone, least of all me. However, I ran a theater production company for ten years from 1987 -1997, and I promised myself I would never do it again—never say never.

Founded in 2011, Gia Forakis & Company (GF&CO) is an ensemble of professional theater artists trained and committed to the exploration and application of One-Thought-One-Action™ (OTOA) under the artistic direction of Gia Forakis. OTOA is a rehearsal and performance technique for artists and directors created and taught by Forakis as a method for identifying increments of thought as smaller moments of physical action. GF&CO’s mission is to put OTOA into action by producing vivid, highly detailed, physically engaging events for the stage through re-envisioned classics, company-driven original work, and experimentation of theatrical form and style. GF&CO is comprised of 9 Company Member-Actors (plus a growing resource of Associate and Affiliate Artists) ranging in age from 28-70. Members are selected upon strength of acting ability and commitment to our goals and mission regardless of ethnic or cultural background. All members play an active role in the organization both artistically and administratively.

I call GF&CO my destiny and my insanity. Running a not-for-profit theater company is an example of passion and faith in action. There is no visible need for another theater company in this country, much less another theater company in New York City, where we are based, and yet, here we are.

I am not going to sugar coat this. This is a challenging pursuit. If you do not have the drive and hunger for it, do something else, because despite the workload that comes with the territory of building and running a not-for-profit, there is an added pressure in working to maintain a relative "need" that makes your drive to be seen, heard, and supported essential. It is because of this that passion and strength of conviction must be strong and clear, because the pushback is like seismic waves: unseen but felt — and they do not let up. Every week there is another, young, start-up theater company that’s as eager as you are to make their mark and raise funding.

Additionally, running a not-for-profit theater company is a 24/7 proposition. There is very little time to rest on any "laurels" or languish in accomplishments. There is always another email to get out, another Thank You note to send, another grant to apply for, another challenge to confront, and other dollar to raise.

Sometimes I feel that my YSD master’s degree is really a degree in trouble-shooting. 90% of my creativity is applied to how to manage resources, how to stretch a dollar, how to leverage my network, and the magic of how to rub two pennies together to buy supplies.
We are a very young company and we are only now, after two and a half years preparing to build our Board of Directors and establish our own 501(c) 3. Oddly enough, after two and half years we have only produced two salons series seasons, readings, and events.

Our first full production will be the end of 2014, which, by the time it is up and running, will be the conclusion of two years and a half of development. My approach, in this respect, is quality over quantity—which is something that goes against the current cultural trends for doing more in less time

In the advent of social media the fear of losing ground and becoming yesterday's news or loosing recognition in the sea of other sources of entertainment and technology competing for our attention, putting quality over quantity, and trusting that where art production is concerned that slow is sometimes fast enough, can feel like risky business. But I am proud of what we are building and the footing we have established so far with GF&CO. Each proverbial brick in our foundation and each product we create from our website to our salon series is representative of a brand of content and standards that we can stand firmly behind.

Despite what may seem like a bleak picture of struggle with little reward and little sleep, leading a core group of theater artists committed to a single vision and inspiring them to take ownership for a technique and a quality of the theater that we all want to see actualized and that we find an inherent need for is inspirational.

One key to this role of Artistic Leadership is flexibility! Once you accept this, you will be a lot better off. In not-for-profit where there is never enough money and no one is getting paid what they deserve, the playing field is always changing.

I myself do not take a salary, and everyone else is receiving a small stipend for their efforts. I am fortunate enough to have a family who can offer me room and board so I can devote myself to building this company. Ultimately it is my goal that we will establish an endowment that will support salaries for an administrative staff.

Inspiring others is another essential ingredient not only for supporting your enterprise, but for raising funds to support it. Inspiration begins with gratitude and giving credit where credit is due. Getting to know the people you are working with, and identifying and rewarding their strengths, giving them room to contribute, asking for their opinion, taking their suggestions and making them feel heard are all ingredients to unifying a team effort. But knowing the type of people who you like to work with is also important. It does no one any good to sign on for a project if there are personal incompatibilities or different work styles.

GF&CO has my name on it, but it is about how I work for the Company that I gain the most. It is easier to work for them than it ever was for me to promote my own individual career as a freelance Theater Director. As we grow professionally, I grow personally and artistically.
Aside in addition to our mission statement is my own measure of success, which motivates me each day to bring the best part of myself to the tasks at hand. These are the pluses and minus of the territory.

* * * *

Angus Kress Gillespie  
New Jersey Folk Festival, Director  
Yale College 1964

I have the good fortune to currently serve as the Director for a small nonprofit organization that I founded back in 1975. It is not a full-time job. Instead, it’s something that I do alongside my regular job as a Professor at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey.

I first came to Rutgers in the fall of 1973 as an instructor in the American Studies Department. It was a tiny department with two professors. One was a specialist in literature and popular culture; the other, a specialist in the social sciences and women’s studies. I was the third professor ever hired, to round things out with a background in folklore and material culture. When I got started at Rutgers, I had the idea in the back of my mind that someday I might like to start a folk festival because my mentor in graduate school at the University of Pennsylvania, Don Yoder, was a big advocate of folk festivals. Yoder was one of the founders of the Kutztown Folk Festival back in 1947. But I figured that starting up a folk festival would have to wait for long time, perhaps many years, because my research agenda would have to take precedence, given the pressure to “publish or perish.” Little did I know that an opportunity to create a folk festival would soon present itself.

At that time, American Studies was part of Douglass College, a separate college for women within Rutgers. Douglass had its own faculty and its own curriculum. The Dean of Douglass College was Marjorie Somers Foster. The department of higher education for the State of New Jersey had decided that Douglass College was to become the magnet college for the arts. As a result, there was an exciting development at Douglass—the completion of a magnificent new four-part arts complex, built astride a large ravine leading to the Raritan River. On one side of the ravine, they built a theater and a music rehearsal hall. On the other side of the ravine, there was a building for the study of art history, plus a building for studio art. Spanning the ravine and connecting the four buildings of the two sides was a pedestrian bridge, affording a dramatic view of the ravine below.

Understandably proud of the new multi-million dollar arts complex, Dean Foster declared the academic year 1973-1974, “The Year of the Arts,” and she set up a committee that fall to come up with appropriate activities. As a result, the English Department came up with a series of poetry readings; Theater developed a series of plays; Dance planned a series of performances; Music hosted a number of recitals; and Art proposed a number of exhibitions. Although I was very new to the college, I went to the Dean and complained.
“How can you have a Year of the Arts and leave out the American Studies Department? After all, as you know, we are heavily involved in the arts,” I said.

“Well,” she replied, “if you feel that strongly about it, I shall appointment you to the committee.”

At the very next meeting of the committee, I told the other members that they could not really have a “Year of the Arts” without a folk festival. To my surprise, the proposal met with almost no opposition.

“Well, if you feel that strongly about it,” said the chair, “go ahead and plan a folk festival. By the way, you can have a budget of $1300.”

I was very pleased with the outcome, and $1300 sounded like a lot of money at the time, though I was not quite sure how to proceed. A few days later, Charles Woolfolk, who was associate dean of Douglass College, took me aside.

“Look,” he said, “you can take that $1300 and blow it on a one-shot folk festival, but what I advise you to do is to plan ahead. For the first year at least, try to get the musicians to donate their services. Then take the money and invest it in T-shirts, hot dogs, and beer. You can sell that stuff for a profit. Then take the proceeds and put it in the bank. That way, you can create a revolving fund, continue the festival on an annual basis, and eventually you may even be able to pay the musicians a small honorarium.” He went on to explain that this seed money was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

It immediately became clear that, if the proposed folk festival were to survive beyond the first year, it would have to be a hybrid, a kind of mixture of the public and private sectors. Though the event would take place on the campus, be managed by faculty, and be run by students, it would have to generate enough revenue on its own to pay for the programming content—the singers, the dancer, the musicians, the storytellers, and the crafts demonstrators.

Fortunately, it all worked out and the Festival is still going after nearly forty years.

* * * *
COMMUNITY

Susan Nappi
United Way of Greater New Haven, Director of Grants and Evaluation
Yale School of Public Health 2001

As an undergraduate majoring in psychology I became fascinated with research and understanding what made people tick. Upon graduation, I immersed myself in research aimed at better understanding disordered behavior, specifically in the realms of eating behavior and then in addiction. In my personal life I volunteered at the Sexual Assault Crisis Center in Waterbury, CT and organized rallies to raise awareness about sexual assault and intimate partner violence. I came face to face with issues affecting all segments of the population but mostly the most vulnerable among us – the poor and disenfranchised. These experiences led me to the burning question: how can lessons learned in the laboratory create real change in the community? After six years in research units in both New York (New York Hospital Cornell Medical Center) and Yale, I had a strong desire to merge my research skills with my passion for social justice. I learned about the field of public health, which frankly I misunderstood as the field that focused mainly on infectious diseases and sanitation, and felt that this was the bridge to doing just that.

I had a longstanding relationship with Yale at that point so it felt natural to continue my studies there. When I received my degree in 2001, I took the charge of changing the world very seriously. I was interested in grassroots public health – working side by side with the communities to find answers to the most pressing issues.

Funding dried up several times, each instance causing me to scurry and find somewhere else to put my skills to use. Despite disruption in funding from time to time, I have been fortunate to focus my career efforts on serving the disenfranchised in several different capacities – as coordinator of research initiatives aimed at improving the health of underserved communities, as a consultant working with foundations and health and human services agencies, and as an administrator overseeing healthcare services in the area of women’s health. The common themes threading my work have been a commitment to capacity building, participatory methods, and mentoring.

My most recent brush with funding loss caused me to pause and think more creatively about what I wanted to do when I grew up. There had to be a better way than continuing to chase funding dollars and focus on priority areas deemed worthy by someone else. Call it kismet but quite by accident I came across a job posting at the United Way of Greater New Haven. The position called for someone who possessed research and programming skills to assist in evaluating initiatives and help guide funding priorities in areas of education, income and health. The emphasis of the work at UWGNH is to fund initiatives aimed at reducing disparities in these areas. In the last few years United Way of Greater New Haven has transformed from a predominantly grantmaking organization to an "Impact" United Way, focused on change, not charity; on community building through the "glue" work of fostering strategic collaborations with other nonprofit service providers, and leveraging resources and expertise. Although
my move is recent one (I’ve been with UWGNH for less than a year) I am already finding that my research skills and passion to improve the condition of the community have a great impact both within UWGNH and with our community partners. I look forward to a long career here.

In the 13 years since I’ve graduated from YSPH I have gleaned valuable insights: that all types of knowledge are necessary for effective change in the community, that in most instances you can find a common goal if you look hard enough, and that you get more compromise with honey than vinegar.

I would tell any graduate to learn what it is they do best and marry that with what inspires them. I love sharing a good cup of coffee and would welcome the opportunity to chat with anyone interested in finding out more about my work at the United Way (www.uwgnh.org).

* * * *

Monica Roers
YWCA, New Jersey, Former CEO
Yale School of Management 1993

I have had a rewarding career in nonprofit management over the past two decades, a career which literally has taken me from one end of the country to another. My earliest career experience in the nonprofit sector was a year spent after undergraduate school working in Washington, DC for the American Council on Education in its Center for Leadership Development. During that year, I decided to pursue an advanced degree and subsequently earned a Master in Public and Private Management (now called an MBA) with a concentration in nonprofit management from the Yale School of Management. Between my first and second years at Yale, I interned at the United Way of Greater New Haven in the Allocations and Planning Department. During that summer, I thoroughly enjoyed making site visits to various nonprofit human service organizations, learning about the programs they offered, and reviewing their financial statements. Following graduation, I was hired as the Director of Allocations and Planning for the United Way of Central Massachusetts. In that capacity, I worked with volunteers to distribute $4.5 million annually to 46 nonprofit organizations. I also conducted a community-wide needs assessment which identified areas of unmet need and which was used to re-direct funding in future years to high priority needs.

All local United Way affiliates are part of an international network supported by United Way Worldwide (UWW) in Alexandria, Virginia. UWW promotes career opportunities throughout the United Way network. Through UWW’s job postings, I learned about my next job as Vice President of the Community Resources Division at United Way of the Greater New Orleans area. There I directed the Center for Effective Nonprofit Management, which was incubated in the United Way. The Center provided management consulting and training services to nonprofit organizations in the New Orleans area. During my tenure, I worked with the Center’s advisory board on a business plan to determine whether the Center should remain in the United Way or spin out and become a separate entity. Ultimately, the Center spun out of the United Way and changed its name to the Center for Nonprofit Resources. For the next 6½ years, I served as the CEO of this start-up nonprofit organization. It was an exciting
adventure to help create all the Center’s operating systems (from accounting to fundraising to human resources), to help develop its board of directors, to expand the staff from 2 to 12, and to broaden the impact that the Center’s programs had on nonprofit organizations throughout Southeast Louisiana.

After nine years in New Orleans, I moved to Oregon and spent nearly a year as the Managing in the National Office of Friends of the Children. Friends of the Children provides professional, paid mentors to extremely at-risk children. When I arrived, the program was being implemented in a dozen communities around the country, and the outcomes from its oldest chapter were extremely impressive. Thus, I was part of the National Office’s efforts to attract national foundation grants and federal monies to fund a longitudinal study to demonstrate that the long-term benefits of this program (e.g., preventing incarceration, preventing teen pregnancy) outweighed its costs.

From Oregon I moved to New Jersey where I spent 6 years as the CEO of a local YWCA which employed 400 full and part-time staff. The YWCA’s budget of $8 million funded programs including child care centers, after-school care, summer camps, swimming lessons, health and fitness programs, a rape crisis center, and programs aimed at eliminating racism and empowering women. During my tenure, I helped complete a $4 million capital campaign to renovate the YWCA’s main program facility. I also worked with the board of directors and staff to conduct a long-range strategic plan which strengthened the administrative capacity of the YWCA and which led to a number of programmatic expansions.

Currently, I am working in the Denver metropolitan area for the Adams County Department of Human Services. This is the first time in my post-graduate school career that I am not employed by a nonprofit organization. However, as a government employee, I still have close contact with the nonprofit sector. I am responsible for awarding and overseeing contracts made by Adams County to nonprofit partners through the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program. I also serve on the Governing Board of Aurora@Home, which is collaborative effort of nonprofit and governmental partners that are piloting a program to reduce homelessness by providing comprehensive, coordinated services to homeless families. Moreover, in my spare time I teach a class or two in Regis University’s Master in Nonprofit Management program. Thus, as you can see from my experience, a career in the nonprofit sector can be rewarding and challenging, and opportunities exist for career progression and relocation if you are so inclined.

* * * *
EDUCATION

John Bacon
New York Public Library, Head of Planned Giving
Yale College 1985

I was an undergraduate architecture major and quickly branched out into a career in historic preservation and museum work, picking up a related master’s degree along the way. While I enjoyed this work immensely, by the time I was in my early 30s, it did not seem like it was going to shape up into a satisfying career.

So, as many of my classmates did ten years before, I went to law school. If you had told me I would be a lawyer even a year before this time, I would have laughed. But I enjoyed school—how doesn’t like being a student?!—and practiced trusts and estates law for a few years in a nice white shoe firm. That gave me needed experience and helped pay back my student loans, but I knew private practice was not my future.

After a brief, not always happy but lucrative time at a brokerage house, I found my current job as head of Planned Giving at The New York Public Library (NYPL). This has been a great fit for me, as I am able to use my legal skills to help support NYPL’s strong, truly democratic mission. It does not hurt that NYPL has diverse and important collections that I enjoy learning more about and sharing with our supporters. But it is the regular interaction with these supporters that is the best part of my job: I get paid to work with smart, engaged New Yorkers and others who value what NYPL represents and want to ensure that it continues for future generations. I think anyone who finds a charity whose mission and values they share can have a similarly rewarding experience in the nonprofit sector. I look forward to coming to work, which I cannot always say I did when working in the for-profit world.

Finally, nonprofit work has allowed me to maintain a good work-life balance, so I can enjoy the many cultural opportunities here in New York (at least the free and cheap ones) and also have time to give back. I have done the latter by serving on the boards of two local preservation groups (yes, architecture is still a passion!), as well as the Philanthropic Planning Group of Greater New York, the Yale Alumni Fund, and a local AIDS housing and services provider. This service has been very rewarding both personally and professionally: I encourage everyone to do the same, as the time and occasional blood and tears are worth it if you care about the mission of the organizations and your community. The networking is not too bad either and you never know when that might come in handy in the future.

* * * *
Kathy Edersheim  
Global Travel Programs, Yale Alumni Association, Senior Director  
Yale College 1987

Having started my career in the business world in a work-study program earning my MBA, I found myself working as a financial adviser when I was about ten years out of Yale. Although the work was interesting and I enjoyed the relationships with clients as well as the research on companies when I had two children, it seemed time to stay home for a bit. That decision would be a story about childcare availability and choices rather than one about non-profit work.

As a mother—not financially gainfully employed, I wanted to stay involved with the outside world. The most accessible and flexible opportunities for me turned out to be “volunteering” at the Yale Club of New York City. The YC is a non-profit however it is not a charitable organization. The role of a volunteer is to be involved with the governance and decision making structure of the Club. I worked my way up the ladder starting on the Activities Committee and eventually becoming the first woman President of the Club (2006-2008.) Being part of the governance is a fulfilling role with challenges of its own. Although it is a volunteer role, it is important to understand the business framework of the Club. Governance is well-supported by the General Manager of the Club as well as over 200 people who work for the organization. As part of the governance, you meet many members and become close to those you work with including other Yale alumni and the professional team. It also provides insight into the hospitality industry and management.

While serving on the Yale Club Committees and Council (Board), I became involved with the Association of Yale Alumni (AYA) which was eager to have representation of the YC among its own governance. Since the Yale Club has approximately 8,500 Yale alumni members, it “touches” many Yale alumni every month with its newsletter and other marketing and services. With AYA I served as a volunteer starting as a delegate to the Assembly and then serving on the AYA Board of Governors, an advisory board to Yale representing the alumni. Serving on this Board provided insight into the opportunities for alumni engagement and potential changes in alumni relations.

Following my service on the Board, I led the Yale Global Alumni Leadership Exchange which takes delegations of Yale alumni (with family and friends) to various countries to share best practices in alumni relations with other universities. It was very rewarding to be part of a new initiative and begin the process of building an organization. My involvement has led to travel to many places around the world and making friends at institutions in each city that YGALE has visited. As the leader of the group, I learned about managing group dynamics as well as logistics. It also required a significant amount of writing especially compared to anything else that I had done since Yale.

My work with YGALE and other Yale alumni programs (Yale Alumni Service Corps, Yale Club, Yale Women, YANA, etc.) has ultimately led me to join the working team at AYA in running the Yale Educational Travel program as well as YGALE and YASC. It was time to reenter the financially gainfully employed sector of the economy now that my children were teenagers. Seeing Yale and, specifically, AYA “from the inside” is quite different from the volunteer role and quite different from the New York
business world that I had left in 1998. The mission of the university and the alumni association are deeply embedded in the culture of the institution and reflected in the day-to-day work and responsibilities. Yale is a very large institution and there are many people to meet as well as many systems to learn. And while there are many advantages to be at a mission-driven institution with passionate people, there are also challenges. The financial systems are challenging to navigate in a way that a for-profit company could never sustain. Yale is charming for many of its traditions that are worth preserving as are its buildings however it lacks the competitive drive found in the corporate culture that ensures a company will run efficiently. In my observation of non-profits more broadly, this is often the case as the purpose of the entity demands all the attention and can often be sustained in the less competitive context of charities and good causes.

Working at Yale, perhaps not the most representative non-profit being in academia and being very large (almost $3 billion in annual budget) is a constant lesson in management and negotiation as well as in my area of international alumni relations and travel. It is providing an extended opportunity for me to see more of the world and meet even more wonderful people as part of collaborative efforts with many other universities and NGOs/non-profits.

The non-profit world is vast and expansive. It can provide options to pursue your dream in a way that the traditional business world cannot. Even within Yale there are a many types of careers to pursue from human resources to academics to communications to development to alumni relations. It is a world worth exploring if you would choose to join the non-profit world in support of higher education.

Note: I would be happy to speak with anyone interested in hearing more about Yale (and anything else for someone with questions) from my perspective.

* * * *

EDUCATION – YOUTH

Laura Kadetsky
New Leaders, General Counsel
Yale College 1999

I joined New Leaders in 2010 as its first General Counsel. Founded in 2000 by a team of social entrepreneurs, New Leaders is a national nonprofit that develops transformational school leaders and designs effective leadership policies and practices for school systems across the country. New Leaders runs training and preparation programs for aspiring principals, supports current principals, offers consulting services to state departments of education and school districts across the country, and works to improve leadership policies for school systems.

I did not come to New Leaders from a traditional education background but from a legal track. After leaving Yale, I worked for a year as a paralegal at the U.S. Department of Justice and then went to law school (with a short detour for cooking school in Paris along the way). Following law school, I clerked for a federal district court judge in Memphis, Tennessee, then moved to New York to join Kirkland & Ellis
LLP, a large, national law firm, in its litigation department. Kirkland has a strong commitment to pro bono work, which meant that I was able to start pro bono legal work soon after I joined the firm. My very first project was for New Leaders, and that started me on the path to the nonprofit career I have now.

Over my six years at Kirkland, I represented New Leaders, as well as other nonprofit and individual pro bono clients, on a wide range of matters. Taking on this type of work gave me the chance to do things that I wasn’t always able to do for paying clients; I had more responsibility on these cases and worked on things like contract negotiation, employment advice, and other issues that weren’t just the litigation work that was my regular assignment. Most importantly, I got to know my clients really well, and was thrilled to make a substantial difference for people and companies that needed my help. When New Leaders decided it wanted to hire its first General Counsel, I thought it was the perfect opportunity to take the pro bono work I had been doing to another level, so I applied.

Being the General Counsel is a truly rewarding way to combine my legal experience with the thrill of making a positive and significant difference in education and, ultimately, in children’s lives. Every day I am faced with a different legal issue, so I feel like I’m always learning. I also get to apply my legal skills directly in the context of the organization, so I can see the impact of my work and know how to improve it to match with the needs of the organization. Finally, I know that what I’m doing supports the organization to accomplish its goals and, ultimately, its vision — educational excellence and equity for all students in America. To me, changing educational outcomes for students is the work that needs to be done to help the next generation. I may not be an educator who is able to help individual students, but my work lets me use my skills to help them another way.

For more information visit our website at www.newleaders.org.

* * * *

Jessica Sager
All Our Kin, Founder and Executive Director
Yale Law School 1999

I am the founder and executive director of All Our Kin, a New Haven-based nonprofit dedicated to increasing access to high-quality early care and education for the young children of low-income parents.

In 1999, All Our Kin first opened its doors in a dilapidated New Haven housing project with two staff members—myself and my friend Janna Wagner, a graduate of the Harvard School of Education—along with six mothers and six children. At the time, recent changes in federal welfare law were forcing many parents with small children to choose between economic survival and their children’s safety, healthy development, in part because they could neither find nor afford high-quality child care. Our mission was simple: Create a child care collaborative in which a select number of these parents learned to become high-quality accredited early childhood educators themselves. Soon, we expanded our mission to bring training and business support to a network of family child care providers—people in the business of caring for other parents’ young children out of their own homes.

When All Our Kin began, we had a donated space, and donated toys, furniture, and equipment. I had some funding thanks to Yale Law School’s Arthur Liman Fellowship. A tiny amount of additional grant
funding covered the salary of my co-founder, Janna Wagner. In those early years, Janna focused on the education, and I did everything else: drafting budgets, writing grant applications, soliciting donations, building a board of directors, mediating conflicts, advocating on behalf of parents to government agency bureaucrats, cleaning and disinfecting the child care space—the list goes on. Slowly, our budget grew, we hired more staff, and I learned more about managing payrolls and people.

For nearly ten years nobody cared very much about All Our Kin—except, of course, the women and children that we served. Janna and I carried on, training parents and providers, helping women build small businesses, trying to ensure that children were receiving the high-quality early learning experiences they deserved. I spoke passionately about the importance of early care and education to those few people who cared, and we existed in a tiny, marginalized corner.

And then, the economy changed. All of a sudden, All Our Kin wasn’t an early care and education program; it was a workforce development program, creating microbusinesses in low-income communities, and giving parents vital work supports. Suddenly, communities across the country want to learn how to do what we do, and All Our Kin has become a model and resource for others seeking to build family child care capacity and quality. We work directly with over 300 parents and educators, serving over 1,500 children, in greater New Haven and greater Bridgeport. In addition, we provide training and technical support to a network of 41 community-based organizations across the state; these organizations in turn are building connections with family care providers in their communities. Throughout, my lawyer training has made a difference. I could master a complex set of applicable federal and State statutes and regulations. And, as an advocate for the people we served, I could command the attention and respect of the powerful in a way that they could not do on their own.

For a lawyer, I took a relatively unusual and uncharted career path. In hindsight, this path is not for the risk-averse or the faint of heart. It’s certainly not the way to financial plenitude. But for me, it is one of the best decisions I have ever made.

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ENVIRONMENT

Amy Kohout
GreenCorps & Princeton in Asia, Former Fellow
Yale College 2004

I worked in the non-profit sector for four years, between graduating from Yale in 2004 and starting graduate school in 2008. Though I’m currently six years into a PhD in history at Cornell, my non-profit experience is an important part of my career trajectory, and directly connected to my interest in becoming an academic historian. I share it here in case my path is useful to folks imagining a future in NGO or academic work, and I’m happy to talk with anyone who might be interested in one or more of the opportunities I describe below.

At Yale, I was a history major, a FOOT leader, and a rugby player. When I graduated, I was ready to do something else for a while, and decided to pursue opportunities to work on environmental issues. I got a
job with Green Corps, a training program in environmental organizing. The summer before Green Corps began, I took a job working as a trail cook on an expedition for 13-15 year-old girls with a small wilderness education foundation in New Mexico.

While with Green Corps, I worked on a non-partisan youth voting initiative, a corporate accountability campaign, and a campaign aimed at growing the grassroots base of an advocacy organization. When I left Green Corps, I applied to Princeton in Asia, an organization that places young people interested in service in positions across Asia. Because of my interest and experience with environmental issues, I was offered a job at the Lao country office of The World Conservation Union (IUCN). My job was primarily to support the country’s programmatic director with her workload, which meant I worked on project and funding reports and attended meetings with government partners and donors. During my year at IUCN, I learned about the nuts and bolts of development work, about the bureaucracies of governments and large NGOs, and about the different kinds of factors that influence projects and their funding streams. My experience in small offices where administrative and programmatic tasks are often difficult to disentangle was an asset.

I returned home to the United States to take a job as the Assistant Director of the Cottonwood Gulch Foundation, the same place I’d worked as a summer staff member. It was just me and the director during the year, so I learned how to do a little bit of everything, including (helping with) soldering copper pipes, bulk mailing, managing a computer network, and applying for federal permits for public lands. I also gained experience working with a board of trustees and planning the budget for a small organization.

After four years away from school, I felt ready to pursue a graduate degree. I began in the history PhD program at Cornell in the fall of 2008. I am currently working on a dissertation in American environmental and cultural history. And while I focus on the late 19th and early 20th century, I teach a much wider swath of American history. My experiences in environmental non-profit work certainly shape my interest in and my understanding of the ways the past has bearing on current and future environmental questions.

I’m happy with my path – and I see the continuities in those years before graduate school in ways I might not have when I was in the middle of all of it. I do want to emphasize that even though I currently work in the academy, I use the skills I developed in the non-profit sector every day. The cold-calling and door-knocking that were part of my organizing training have helped me with professional networking. The information sessions I led when I worked for the wilderness education foundation to schools and groups of parents about our programs helped my public speaking skills, which I use in my teaching and in conference talks. The collaborative work and administrative skills I developed prepared me for some side projects I’ve worked on—reading groups I coordinate, a grant-funded outreach project with the Smithsonian, and my work on the editorial team for a new journal of narrative and experimental history.

If I had one piece of advice to offer students interested in pursuing opportunities at small non-profits, it would be to be prepared (and excited, even!) for the less glamorous side of the work.
Everyone does office work in small organizations, and learning those skills can be a great way into being included in the programmatic stuff you’re interested in.

Actually, I’ve got one more piece of advice: Think about the kinds of organizations you’d like to work for, and contact them. Ask folks doing jobs you’d like to be doing to have coffee with you, and find out how they got to where they are. Figure out what skill sets are valuable in the area you want to work, and get those skills. And don’t be afraid to volunteer for different organizations to learn the various approaches non-profits take to accomplish their goals. My non-profit experience has been primarily in environmental organizations, but within that category, I was exposed to different kinds of advocacy, education, and development work.

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Eric Peterson
Randall's Island Park, Deputy Park Administrator
Yale College 1999

A month after graduating from Yale, a double-major in Biology and International Studies, I started at the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation. I got the job on the basis of my experience as SAC chair, Squiche manager, YCC rep, Spring Fling chair, backstage work with the Dramat and YaleDancers and the like, rather than my stellar transcript! I would essentially be SAC chair for New York City, helping to develop, produce and seek sponsorship for public programming and other initiatives, and to manage the various private and promotional events in the parks. My projects ranged from implementing a roller disco night in each of the five boroughs (sponsored by Rollerblade) to assessing the site fees paid by myriad disease-a-thons that raise money in the parks (AIDS Walk, Kidney Walk, March of Dimes...) to managing the unveiling of a 2-story Hanes Tagless T-shirt in Times Square with Yogi Berra and Mr. T, plus lots of less glamorous stuff.

Parks was an early implementer of Public-Private Partnerships in a big way. Non-profits like the Central Park Conservancy and the Prospect Park Alliance, as well as the City Parks Foundation, were formed in the early 1980's, to help raise money and support for the parks - operations, capital improvements and programming, and have proliferated in the decades since. Today, there are several dozen Parks-affiliated non-profits, ranging widely in size, budget, funding sources and operational involvement. These non-profits have raised hundreds of millions of dollars for the parks, and effectively galvanized support in ways that are difficult for the City to pull off. These efforts complement, augment and at time supplant City efforts. Ideally, these non-profits are more nimble than the City bureaucracy, can target donated and granted funds efficiently to the relevant parks, programs and projects, and can apply more resources than an ever-more-strapped city agency. While the role, impact and desirability of the public-private partnerships can be debated, it is clear that this model is with us for the foreseeable future.
After a decade at Parks, and never far from the PPPs, I came to my current position as Deputy Administrator for Randall's Island in 2009. Randall's Island Park is about 500 acres, in the middle of the East River, between Manhattan, the Bronx and Queens, and features over 60 sports fields, a world-class track and field facility, golf and tennis centers, gardens, wetlands, walking/biking/jogging paths, picnic areas and hosts special events large and small. Randall's Island is operated in partnership between the NYC Parks Department and the Randall's Island Park Alliance (formerly Randall's Island Sports Foundation). RISF was founded more than 20 years ago by parents of students who played sports here to help clean up the park (literally removing broken glass and other hazards from the fields) and to provide youth fitness and sports programs for kids in neighboring East Harlem and the South Bronx. Today, RIPA has grown considerably, with a year-round and seasonal staff of over 60 people and annual budget of $8 Million (raised through a mix of donations, event and concession revenue, and grants), and plays a major operating role in the park - RIPA employees are up to 3/4 of the "boots on the ground," including the track & field staff, turf, horticulture and wetlands crews, and a good portion of the administrative and maintenance staffs. While I am a City employee, most of my staff, budget and other resources come from the non-profit.

At the intersection of public and non-profit, I often find myself dispelling misconceptions from my colleagues in both camps, as well as from the press, politicians and the public at large. By and large, everyone gets along, and we all agree on the same mission of improving the park and offering top-notch facilities for our users, and indeed all New Yorkers. But, there is still tension. My City colleagues see deep pockets, and everything turns into an overtime project or a special order. My non-profit colleagues (especially some of the RIPA trustees) have trouble with City oversight and procedures and the notion that it is "their" park to operate.

For the past several years, RIPA and the park have been at an inflection point - we are wrapping up a massive ($200+ Million) reconstruction of the park and are changing gears to stewardship. (Standards and expectations get higher every year, and facilities don't maintain themselves!) As a part of this, we are seeking to expand our donor and support base (much of the budget comes from concession and event revenue and a few large gifts; at this point we are close to maxed out on events and concessions, and some long-time corporate funders are shifting foci away from us) and to better define and brand what RIPA does. This is an exciting challenge and is calling into question notions that we have all had about the park, the Parks Department and the role of the non-profit. In addition, the administration in City Hall is changing - we have had twenty years of republican (at least nominally) mayors, who have put great stock in public-private partnerships, happily enlisting non-profits to take on some of the burden of providing city services. We are not sure what the future holds with a new mayor who may be less-inclined toward privatization and may seek to consolidate control or hold up the non-profit partners to greater scrutiny.

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RICHARD REISS
City Atlas, Creative Director; Artist As Citizen, Executive Director
Yale Alumni Decarbonization Challenge
Yale College 1981

We’re about to enter a period of such rapid change that there may be only a limited amount you can learn from the past. I say this at the start of my narrative, in order to put things in perspective: maybe the best advice one can give these days is to encourage adaptability and resourcefulness. Rather than a rigid plan, it’s good to know to think critically, and always focus on creating real value rather than symbolic value.

The global energy/population/climate challenge will soon dominate multiple fields. An afternoon reading Yale’s e360.yale.edu should get you up to speed, and the interviews in my own projects -- newyork.thecityatlas.org and artistascitizen.org -- are helpful too. Even better: read New York City’s plan for the future, which can be found online at http://www.nyc.gov/html/sirr/html/report/report.shtml. It’s a detailed and honest appraisal of the next thirty years.

There are more useful references here:
http://artistascitizen.org/YADC_references.html

Three quick points to sum up my past five years of research:

Is there a coherent plan for climate? No.
Is this very, very urgent? Yes. Every year we lock in more of the future.
Can you help? Yes.

The puzzle is that almost all existing career paths are still part of an economy rooted in the past, and are attached to institutions that may not be able to change, or may actually resist change. So: seek institutions that show real progress in understanding the future. Also look to the example of someone like Billy Parish (Yale ‘04, ungraduated), who co-founded the solar financing organization Mosaic; not finding the tool he needed for his ideas, he built one. I haven’t yet read his book, “Making Good,” (makinggood.org), but that would be on my list if I were graduating now.

Curtis Ravenel, director of sustainability at Bloomberg LP and a recent interview in newyork.thecityatlas.org, provides a parallel perspective -- and he’s in the heart of an existing system (finance), at a huge firm, working to reform how the financial system measures real value. Speaking of measurement, some hard numbers: we’re at about 400ppm CO2, way above the norm for human history, and it seems likely we’ll be going way past 500ppm before society catches up to the reality of the situation. John Sterman at MIT System Dynamics has a simulator that allows you predict how far society will go, on your laptop: http://scripts.mit.edu/~jsterman/climate/master/ (‘Experiment 2’ is the one to play.)

I think the next fifteen years will, ideally, be filled with invention, because literally everything needs to be reinvented -- and that includes social relationships as well as lifestyles. This is actually good for someone graduating; you have the advantage, because as you get older there is a natural resistance to changing the status quo. It’s hard for older people to grasp how much the world has changed. For
example, there were about 4.5 billion people on Earth when I graduated in 1981; that number will have doubled to 9 billion by 2050.

In an astonishing statistic showing the material boom of the global economy, the Economist notes that “over 23% of all the goods and services made since 1AD were produced from 2001 to 2010” (6/28/11). Globalization catapulted more people out of poverty than ever in history. But the cost is our ecological ‘overshoot,’ which draws down the planet’s resources faster than can be replenished, and completely overwhelms the planet’s capacity to uptake CO2.

And so a big reason to simplify one’s own lifestyle now isn’t simply altruistic, but realistic: there are 750m or more people entering the global middle class in coming years, and if they all try to live like Americans, then no one will be able to ‘live like an American.’ What it is to ‘live like an American’ needs to be rapidly and persuasively redesigned. We need to design a life that demands less energy and uses it better, while organizing and producing a trillion dollar overhaul of the entire energy system in the US.

My own path has been idiosyncratic, but that’s not unusual for people working in creative fields. At Yale I took Directed Studies and then graduated with a BA in Architecture. After college I entered the film business as a cameraman, and later moved up to directing television commercials. During my years working in television and advertising, I continued to think about public communications and democracy.

I developed the idea for a project called One-Country.com, a deliberative democracy platform, after recognizing that in a market democracy, you need not ‘this fix’ or ‘that fix,’ you need other citizens to make wise choices. One-Country.com was too ambitious to self-finance, so I simultaneously co-founded a smaller project that could be built out-of-pocket, with similar educational aims: Artist As Citizen.

At Artist As Citizen we connect top emerging talent with minigrants for the creation of work on social issues. Our early work caught the eye of the organizers of the first US Tipping Point conference (December, 2009), which was co-hosted by the British Council, Columbia University, and CUNY. This ultimately led to our partnering with the CUNY Institute for Sustainable Cities on City Atlas, after winning start-up funding from the Rockefeller Foundation. City Atlas is a new way to educate about climate change, by blending ideas about the future into the activities of daily life.

The main ingredient of AAC is the supply of talent from top creative programs. We’ve built an expandable system that can have a high return on donor investment, both as a public education tool and as a transformative experience for the next generation of talented leaders. My co-founder Ian Umeda and I work on AAC as volunteers, and we hope to create staff positions -- but for now, all the funding we get goes directly into projects.

After a lifetime of research into behavior and cognition, Daniel Kahneman, winner of the Nobel in Economics, concludes that “happiness consists mostly of spending time with people we like.” His insight frees people from the need for placing a priority on financial reward; I would add that finding meaningful work is also a core component of happiness, and one that happens to be essential for the future as well.

I’m happy to talk about the opportunities and stakes described above, by phone, email or over coffee, and can be reached at richard.reiss@artistascitizen.org.

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FOUNDATIONS

Elizabeth Likins Graham
The Rainbow Foundation
Yale School of Medicine 2001

I was fortunate enough to graduate from Yale in 2001 with a Master’s in Medical Science. Medicine has always been my passion. I can remember reading the journal American Scientific as a ten year old. Along with that love of science came a desire to “heal” people. I tried to fix the dog, my sister, anyone who was sick or injured. I am sure my family got totally sick of it. This early experience molded me going forward.

In college I pursued a degree in biology and while there, I worked in the Neuroscience Department at Albert Einstein College of Medicine. My job brought me into contact with patients who were enrolled in a clinical trial. I felt an almost primal need to help these people. It was heartbreaking at times to not be able to disclose to them what medication regime they were receiving. This may have impacted my decision to leave medicine and head off to New York to work in business. I was an Assistant Vice President at Citibank for a number of years and enjoyed it a great deal.

Then life intervened and I got married and had a little boy. We moved out to Connecticut and I started re-thinking my priorities. I started getting involved with charities through my office. The biggest life-changing event during this period was my mother’s illness and subsequent death. I decided to go back to school and the love of my life, medicine. I started the process by becoming a volunteer EMT. This was a humbling and edifying experience. So many elderly people I have found don’t have food to eat or help with chores. They can live in squalor in the middle of an affluent community, surviving on cat food.

Before heading off to Yale I chose to adopt a son from Russia. My little one was from an orphanage in Siberia. The Russian economy was in a shambles and everyone was desperate for money. Many children had been put up for adoption because the families couldn’t afford to keep them. As a part of our adoption process we were asked to bring supplies, food and clothes for the orphans. When we got to Baby Orphanage #2, we saw the children were quite malnourished. The kids would gather in the playground and solicit candy from the adopting parents. It was desperately sad.

My family now complete, I headed off to Yale’s graduate Physician Associate program. A grueling 27 months which I loved, followed. However, I felt something was missing. It was time to give back to world. My father started the Rainbow Foundation, and we became involved in raising money and necessities for local women and children.

The Rainbow Foundation identifies specific needs that can be addressed immediately. We act primarily on a local level. The activities have included everything from buying and delivering mattresses for kids who sleep on the floor, to buying a transitional house for battered women. I like to be able to see the benefit from my activities on the faces of the people we help. Safety, joy and empowerment are what are giving to these ladies. I am thrilled to say that we are opening our second transitional home this month, which will transform many women’s and children’s lives.
From all the activities I have participated in, from medical mission trips to rehabbing a transitional house, I can safely say nothing makes me feel more alive. In addition it has provided me with the opportunity to have my children work alongside me, gaining a sense of accomplishment and empathy.

Although I do not work full time in a non-profit organization, I feel that the passion to give back can take many forms and can be accommodated in any one’s life. A career dedicated to others can take many forms not the least of which is fundraising on behalf of a charity organization. This is probably the most necessary and least regarded part of any non-profit. If you feel passionate about your charity, though, it is easier to convey your message and bring people together. Going with a career that gives back will always give the most back to you.

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HEALTH

Imran Babar
Rare Genomics Institute, Scientific Affairs, Vice President
Yale College 2011

I currently serve as the VP of Scientific Affairs for Rare Genomics Institute (RGI), a nonprofit biotech focused on advancing scientific research for patients who have rare diseases. RGI uses the tools of social media to raise awareness about rare health conditions and fund research projects for patients who do not yet have a diagnosis. RGI was founded in April 2011 and has since established sites across the globe in the U.S., Israel, East Asia, Australia, Europe, and Canada.

Around 250 million people worldwide have a rare disease, but since each specific rare disease affects relatively few people, research for most conditions is either not available or is very limited. Thus, patients with these conditions are often left without a therapy and with little understanding of their disease. Meanwhile, the scientific community has limited resources dedicated to understanding these conditions, and patients are often left without hope.

In order to address this need, RGI connects the top researchers from around the world who have access to genomics technologies with families affected by rare diseases. Since most rare diseases are genetic in nature, we harness genome sequencing as a starting point for research in order to identify genetic alterations that underlie these conditions. If genetic alterations are identified via genome sequencing, RGI seeks to advance research projects by connecting them to scientists who have expertise in other scientific fields. Research projects are financed using crowd-funding, where families and social networks can directly donate to specific patient projects in order to advance them in the laboratory.

I became involved with RGI as a co-founder during my last year of graduate school. I have always had an interest in using the tools of science to address health problems, but like many scientists I tended to
focus on common conditions that affect a large number of people. During my last year of graduate school I became more aware of the fact that there is a great unmet need for rare disease patients. At the time, Dr. Jimmy Lin who was based out of Johns Hopkins was beginning to form RGI in order to address this need, and after hearing his vision, I was immediately sold. For me, it was exciting to be involved with a start-up that could directly benefit patients who otherwise have little hope in finding a drug to treat their condition. At the same time, I was intrigued by the opportunity to be involved with a start-up from the very beginning since I knew that it would give me exposure to the many aspects of running a company. As RGI grew, I began to focus more on the scientific initiatives such as establishing research sites and building a network of scientists to help with rare disease projects.

Although RGI has accomplished much, including the first-ever crowd-funded sequencing project, the organization is relatively new and still does not have funds to hire employees full-time. As a result, those who work for RGI are volunteers, and all of us have “day jobs” in various fields. Mine involves performing “due diligence” on early stage private life sciences companies in order to help my firm determine which ones are good investment opportunities. This job has taught me a lot and I have found that my work with RGI is benefited by my work in venture capital and vice versa. I feel very fortunate to have the opportunity to learn more about the exciting developments with early stage biotech companies and at the same time have a positive impact on rare disease patients’ lives through my work with RGI.

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Barbara Milrod, M.D.
Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Weill Cornell Medical College
Principal Investigator, Psychotherapy outcome studies
Faculty, New York Psychoanalytic Institute, and the Columbia Psychoanalytic Institute for Treatment and Research

The important thing to keep in mind when you consider what you want your career to ‘be’ when you graduate from college is that your career is and will be fluid, that there will likely be many things you love/would really enjoy doing and find fulfilling. You can import skills from areas of your life you might not have taken terribly seriously and use them. Experiences are rarely wasted. When I graduated from Yale, I never could have predicted that I would wind up doing what I do.

When I graduated from Yale, I had been a biology major, but I largely took humanities courses and I loved writing. I spent that first post-college year in utter chaos, at first working in a job doing pediatric nephrology research from which I was rapidly fired due to incompetence (I had to kill dogs for the research and was unable to do so), and applying to 5 kinds of graduate school: [medicine, law, architecture, journalism, advanced English to get a Ph.D.]. When I was accepted to Yale Medical College I realized that I really wanted to be a doctor. I withdrew all of my other graduate school applications and said no to everyone except for Columbia Medical School, where I was on the wait list. I wound up attending Columbia.
Even when I entered medical school, I was aware that I wanted to work with children. I had realized this during the summer after freshman year of Yale, when I worked as a day camp counselor for 4 year olds. I planned to become a pediatrician, but was put off by the death of a number of babies I cared for as a pediatric sub-intern (4th year). I applied to one psychiatry residency program (Cornell), and mercifully was accepted. I told my training director that I would be a child and adolescent psychiatrist if I came. This seems to be the one thing that I stuck with.

I never considered a research career. I hated labs in college and medical school and I wanted to become a psychoanalyst. When I graduated from my child and adolescent psychiatry fellowship, I had already started my psychoanalytic training, and I took a job, first as the Assistant Director of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at Beth Israel Medical Center (a terrible job) and later that year I became the Associate Residency Training Director in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at Mount Sinai, where I worked for 6 years. I enjoyed being a residency training director, and I loved splitting my time between teaching and seeing patients (kids and adults). Of course, in order to stay in academia, one has to develop an area of expertise and at least write academically. Mount Sinai was a very biological program at the time, and I got aggravated that psychotherapy (what I loved to do) was treated with disrespect. I realized that the people I worked with would never respect what I loved to do unless the field amassed adequate evidence of its efficacy. As a researcher, I agree with them, of course!

It was for these reasons that I began my research career. I moved back to Cornell Medical College to pursue my research career. In the area of psychotherapy outcome research, there is far more evidence (data) about outcomes of cognitive behavioral therapies than for psychoanalytic psychotherapies. As a psychoanalyst in academia, I thought it was my responsibility to work on developing an evidence base for efficacy in this area. With colleagues, I wrote and published the first psychodynamic treatment manual for a dynamic psychotherapy for an Axis I disorder [An Axis I disorder is a major mental disorder in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders], panic disorder. This project took us about 2 and a half years. I then spent about 15 years (with many co-investigators and colleagues) demonstrating efficacy for this therapy, which means conducting psychotherapy research studies. The therapy we operationalized, Panic Focused Psychodynamic Psychotherapy (PFP), is the first psychodynamic psychotherapy to meet ‘evidence-based criteria’ for any Axis I disorder. In the meantime, I have been working on other, smaller research projects along the way.

Currently, I am working on a number of psychotherapy research projects, I teach residents and child psychiatry fellows and work at Cornell, where I spend about half of my time seeing patients, and I serve as a research mentor to many professionals both in the US and abroad. I teach what I do in a number of places (US, Europe) as well.

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Elizabeth Planet
Child Mind Institute, Executive Vice President and Chief Strategy Officer
Yale College 1996

Since 2012 I have been serving as Executive Vice President and Chief Strategy Officer at the Child Mind Institute, which is dedicated to transforming mental health care for children. We provide clinical evaluations and treatment for the full range of childhood mental illness and learning disorders, we conduct brain research to identify the biological underpinnings of psychiatric illnesses, and we provide educational resources to parents, teachers, policymakers, and practitioners.

I have always been interested in the intersection of the brain, behavior, and policy. During law school I spent my non-classroom hours and vacations working on criminal and capital defense cases. My clients were typically young and undereducated, and they were almost always high at the time of their crimes. I remember in particular one defense attorney I worked with on a capital defense case running in to the office with the results of a brain scan she had ordered for our client. She was holding up an image of a brain full of holes; it looked like Swiss cheese.

I have never stopped wondering about the paths that people take from childhood, to school dropout, to drug use, to crime. I am so pleased to have the opportunity to work at an organization that can prevent these outcomes for kids by understanding their emotions and behaviors, and by intervening to set them on a healthier, more productive path.

My own path from law school to the work I do today serving kids with emotional, behavioral and learning challenges was not a direct one. (And I would encourage you too to take a winding path so that you can pick up diverse education and experience along the way!)

After graduating from law school in 1999 I went to work at Simpson Thacher & Bartlett in the M&A group. It was an incredible opportunity to learn about the law and corporate transactions, and to be trained to work diligently and thoroughly. I also had the opportunity to travel internationally a great deal during this time, as I had language skills and an interest in international transactions (and there were no digital data rooms at that time!).

While I found the experience incredible, I did not find the work at the law firm engaging over the long term. After a few years I decided that I wanted to devote my career to working on the issues that were of most interest to me.

In 2002 I left the law firm and joined CASA Columbia as special assistant to the president, Joseph A. Califano, Jr. In making that move, I cut my salary by more than 50 percent. But the opportunity to work on addiction prevention and intervention, and to learn from such a giant in the health policy field, was worth it.
During my time at CASA Columbia I conducted survey research in the field with teenagers, I got to design programs for children in juvenile justice systems, I worked on state initiatives to promote women’s health, and I lobbied FDA to stem the abuse of controlled prescription drugs.

Throughout my time working at CASA Columbia, I served as a lay leader at AJC, the American Jewish Committee. I became increasingly engaged with my work at AJC, and in 2010 I transitioned from being a lay leader to joining the staff full time as Assistant Executive Director and Director of the Department of Regional Offices. In that role, I was responsible for the organization’s 26 U.S. offices across the country. I was honored to have the opportunity to advance the mission of the organization, and to hone my own skills in operations, fundraising, governance, and advocacy. I ultimately decided that I missed the field I had been in, and so I moved over to the Child Mind Institute in 2012.

There is nothing more gratifying and exciting than mission-driven work. It requires immense stores of creativity, optimism, and tenacity. My career to date has been fairly diverse, and I think it is to the benefit of the organizations where I serve. I would encourage Yale students to pursue careers in nonprofit, and to find opportunities to work in more than one field and more than one sector.

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**Alison Singer**  
**Autism Science Foundation, President**  
**Yale College 1988**

According to the Centers for Disease Control, 1 in 88 individuals is diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder. Despite that high prevalence, autism research is grossly underfunded. We need to understand the causes of autism and we need to develop new and better treatments for autism for infants, school-aged children, teens, adults and senior citizens.

My 16 year old daughter is severely affected by autism and I founded the Autism Science Foundation to get answers for her and all the individuals like her who are drastically challenged by autism. Our organization mobilizes families to raise critically-needed money for autism research. We also provide information about autism to the general public and work hard to increase awareness of autism spectrum disorders and the needs of individuals and families affected by autism.

Our research grant funding is targeted at younger scientists; pre-doctoral students, post-doctoral fellows and early-career tenured faculty (assistant professor level), enabling them to collect pilot data in new areas of investigation. Many of our grantees have leveraged their ASF funding into much larger grants from the National Institutes of Health and other government agencies.

ASF conducts workshops and seminars around the country to share the latest autism research with stakeholders, and to foster communication between scientists and families. ASF also provides scholarships to parents, individuals with autism, special education teachers, healthcare professionals and other stakeholders to enable to them to participate in the International Meeting for Autism
Research.

We urge families raising children with autism to rely on evidence-based interventions and treatments that have withstood the rigor of double-blind, placebo controlled trials. In many cases, parents still gravitate toward quick fix, “cure du jour”, unproven, often dangerous treatments in an effort to cure their children’s autism. These can put children at risk for permanent harm and even death. We urge families to read the science and to provide evidence based treatments for individuals with autism.

We measure the impact of our research grants by the value they provide to real people. For example, ASF advocated successfully for a new medical subclassification for autistic wandering, which became possible only after an ASF-funded wandering study was published in Pediatrics, the official peer-reviewed journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics. ASF is currently working to create an “autism alert”, (similar to the AMBER alert) to mobilize recovery resources when a child with autism wanders.

If you had told me, back when I was at Yale that I would be the founder and president of a nonprofit organization I would have thought you were crazy. I think I was probably one of the only one of my friends who knew exactly what I wanted to do after graduation. All my life I had wanted to be a journalist. After Yale I worked in local television news and then worked my way back to New York and was perfectly happy as a producer at NBC News. But life has a way of throwing you curve balls. When my daughter was diagnosed with autism I knew I wanted to use all my professional energy and talents to find answers. I have learned an incredible amount in the process and encourage anyone who is interested in making a real difference early in their career to contact us. We offer paid summer jobs for undergraduates in our New York City office and are growing and adding staff rapidly.

Learn more at www.autismsciencefoundation.org.

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Kristen de Paor
University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health, Director of Development
Yale College 1997

As an undergraduate student I majored in Sociology and was a member of the track and cross country teams. Without a clear sense of what I wanted to do after graduation, I went to work for a market research firm in Manhattan. After a year, I took a job at American Express. I started out in the customer relationship management group and switched to marketing after a year. American Express is headquartered in lower Manhattan in the World Financial Center which is very close to the World Trade Center. I came out of the subway just after the second plane hit WTC on 9/11. Witnessing that event changed my life in many ways.

I quickly realized that I was not cut out for a career in the corporate world. I was a very active volunteer with New York Cares, and when a job opened up there as a corporate relations manager, I jumped at the opportunity to take my marketing skills to the nonprofit world. Financially it was tough. My salary was
cut in half, and I had to take on a weekend job in order to make ends meet, but I was extremely passionate about my work and knew I’d found the right fit.

I moved on from New York Cares to fundraising roles with larger nonprofit organizations in NYC including Pratt Institute, Brooklyn Public Library, and Columbia Business School that put me in a better position financially allowing me to give up my weekend job.

In 2011 my husband and I decided we wanted to leave NYC. We were looking for an affordable city with solid cultural offerings to raise our three year old son, and Pittsburgh fit the bill. I am a year into my role as director of development at the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health. I am extremely happy with my job and the opportunity it affords me to meet dynamic students, alumni and faculty committed to public health.

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**HOUSING**

**Ken Inadomi**

New York Mortgage Coalition, Executive Director
Yale 1976

Without exaggeration I can say that my entry into the nonprofit world was inspired by a signal from the universe. In April 2008 I was driving back to Manhattan from my office in New Jersey, where I own a major credit reporting agency. Picture me in an air-conditioned black BMW X5, windows rolled up, music blasting, totally insulated from the world. I remember my satellite radio was tuned to the 24/7 Bruce Springsteen channel, playing "Pink Cadillac," when I pulled off Route 80 to satisfy some base cravings. I went into a minimart gas station and bought a can of Pepsi, a bag of BBQ pork rinds, and a pack of Marlboro’s. At the time I wasn’t quite sure where this compulsion was coming from other than the vague notion that I was turning to sugar, salt, and nicotine as a substitute for something missing in my life.

When I got back in my car there was a pause between songs and Springsteen was hollering something about, “Nobody wins unless everybody wins.” Bruce Springsteen's work always resonated with me. When his breakout album "Born to Run" was released in '75, my senior year at Yale, I remember those classic songs about faith, loss, and redemption being blasted from window speakers across the Pierson courtyard. His raw energy and New Jersey roots made the guy very appealing to me back then, but what I find most compelling about him now is his self-stated duty to describe "the growing distance between the American reality and the American dream" and why we, collectively, cannot ignore this gap. Just as I was about to crack open that can of Pepsi, it occurred to me that indeed something was missing, and that something was having a life with deeper meaning and greater purpose. I then remembered when the mystic Ram Dass spoke in New Haven back in '74 the one takeaway for me was when he said, "Success without service is merely self-indulgence."
Within ten minutes of this epiphany my cell phone rang - it was my assistant calling to relay a message about a job opening, asking if I knew anyone who might be interested in being the executive director of the New York Mortgage Coalition, a nonprofit housing agency focusing on affordable housing for low and moderate income families - salary of $60,000. I told her I’d call back. For the rest of my one hour drive home I never got around to opening the Pepsi, the pork rinds, or the cigarettes, but I did think deeply about the inflection point in my life at age 53 -- about how I had succeeded in the business world, both corporately and entrepreneurially, and that while I had created a life of success what I yearned for was a life of meaning and impact. The next day I submitted my resume, was called in for an interview the following week, and ultimately offered the job. I later learned that the hiring committee was actively seeking applications from the private sector but received only one, mine.

Five years later I’m still directing the New York Mortgage Coalition and loving it, but my involvement in nonprofit doesn’t end there. An incredible series of rich opportunities to learn and contribute have unfolded including the Yale Alumni Nonprofit Alliance, the AYA Board of Governors, and Project Redwood - a venture philanthropy fund established by my Stanford Business School class. And there’s been an added bonus: since entering the nonprofit, mission-driven sector I’ve developed a completely new network of stimulating friends and professional colleagues, all of us united by common values and the desire to make a difference and change lives.

I’ve often said, only half-kidding, that a Yale education trains you for nothing, but prepares you for everything, meaning at Yale we receive repeated chances to practice three life skills that set us up for virtually any endeavor: how to think critically, how to problem solve, and how to express ourselves both verbally and in writing. However, beyond these valuable skills Yale’s culture also exposes us to the x-factor that I feel separates our experience from peer institutions - we are instilled with a sense of service and the obligation to give back and help change lives in meaningful ways . . . that nobody wins unless everybody wins. Regardless of age, whether you're 23 or 53, once serving others becomes a life priority, unimaginable opportunities to contribute will unfold. I welcome any undergraduates seeking to learn more about careers in nonprofit to contact me at Ken.l@nymc.org.

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INTERNATIONAL

Ed Elmendorf
United Nations Association of the USA, Former President and CEO
Yale College 1960

When I graduated from Yale I knew I wanted to be engaged internationally in some way, but didn’t know how. After teaching English in a public secondary school in Ghana for two years, I joined the US Foreign Service. My initial assignment was at the US Mission to the UN in New York City, under former Presidential Candidate Adlai Stevenson and then former Supreme Court Justice Arthur Goldberg. The work was exciting, and led into a career of employment in public international organizations – the United Nations and then the World Bank.

My first engagements with the non-profit private sector were as speaker. Board service began with a period as Treasurer of the Washington (DC) Chapter of the Society for International Development, a non-profit promoting dialogue and contact among professionals engaged in international development. As I began to move towards retirement, my previous service at the United Nations led me to join the Board of the local chapter of the United Nations Association of the USA – a non-profit engaged in public education on the work of the UN and advocacy for a strong US partnership with the UN.

After I ‘retired’ from the World Bank, I continued to work there, as part-time consultant, but was able to give more time and energy to non-profits. I joined the Board of the World Affairs Council of Washington DC – a non-partisan NGO ‘where learning happens’ about international affairs with an active global education program in DC area schools. Service as Chair of the Council’s Global Education Committee has made it possible for me to promote global perspectives in young people who rarely have such opportunities but will face a world of work that is increasingly globalized.

After serving as volunteer President of the UN Association chapter in Washington and chair of the body coordinating the work of chapter leaders across the country, I was asked to return to full-time employment as President and CEO of the national UNA (UNA-USA), to lead it into what was termed an alliance but was a merger into the UN Foundation (UNF). The logic of the arrangement was clear: UNA-USA had thousands of members across the country and nation-wide capacity for public engagement of internationally oriented citizens but a weak and ever weaker financial position; and, UNF had financial and communications capacity but was limited to DC. Returning to UN work in an entirely new capacity, with tasks I had never performed previously, was challenging and exciting. Building on the legacy of Eleanor Roosevelt in her service as UNA volunteer after leaving the White House and getting to know key figures in the UN world compensated for having the weaker hand in negotiations. (In the World Bank I had become used to having the stronger hand in negotiations.) Once the merger of UNA-USA and UNF was complete, I served as transitional Executive Director of UNA-USA under a UNF umbrella, and then returned to volunteer status, which I continue to enjoy while serving on various boards and advisory bodies.
After a career in the public sector I have found the challenges and opportunities of the NGO world varied and enjoyable. Board service has taught me governance skills, brought contact with new networks of people and institutions, and allowed me to draw upon the experience of decades of international work. Non-profit service has facilitated establishment of new and different links to my home city of Washington after many decades of nearly exclusive orientation overseas.

http://www.worldaffairsdc.org/
http://www.unausa.org/

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Christine Geiser
Off the Mat, Into the World, Fundraiser
Yale College 2007

One of the countless benefits I have received from yoga is feeling empowered to raise awareness about and money for communities that are suffering around the world. In 2009, I discovered Off the Mat, Into the World, an organization that uses the power of yoga to inspire conscious, sustainable activism and to ignite grassroots social change.

Each year, Off the Mat organizes a Global Seva Challenge in which participants from around the world raise money to benefit people in a certain region of the world. So far, the organization has supported fundraisers like me in raising over $3 million dollars for NGOs that are doing incredible work in India, South Africa, Haiti, Cambodia, Uganda and the Amazon. The most successful year of the Seva Challenge was 2012, during which we raised over $1 million for India. It was through raising money to support organizations in India that are providing refuge, rehabilitation and economic opportunities to sex trafficking victims that I learned about and proudly joined the Half the Sky community.

In February 2013, I visited the organizations we supported in India along with the other 40 or so other fundraisers who reached the $20k fundraising goal and the leaders of Off the Mat, Into the World. My intention for this year's Off the Mat Bare Witness Tour to combat sex trafficking in India was to experience awe and inspiration. That said, the horrific stories in books I read and documentaries I watched about sex trafficking in India before the trip diminished my confidence in finding hope in a country with a history so deeply entrenched in the oppression of women.

When I arrived in Delhi, I believed that India desperately needed our guidance and support. As our intense two-week journey unfolded, I realized that we had so much to learn from the tireless NGO leaders we worked with who are making progressive waves in a traditional society. Women face oppression, violence and rape in every country, and the organizations we worked with in Delhi and Kolkata unveiled effective and sustainable models that can be replicated around the world to empower and save women.
We began our journey at an Apne Aap Women Worldwide shelter for women who have been victims of sexual violence and those that are currently in or at risk for entering the sex trade. Under the leadership of Ruchira Gupta, these women and children learn vocational skills and ensure access to their rights. Ruchira's vision is a world where women can realize their full potential. Today, Apne Aap reaches over 10,000 women and girls.

We then spent two days at our second destination, Sanlaap. This organization provides housing, food and vocational training to 160 girls that have been rescued from the sex industry. Many girls were illegally trafficked at a young age, and the stories and scars from their traumatic childhoods brought many of us to tears. The girls taught us skills from block printing to jewelry making, and many of them have gone on to translate the techniques learned at Sanlaap into profitable careers.

My favorite two days of the trip were spent with Women's Interlink Foundation at Made by Survivors and Nikoloy. Aloka Mitra, founder of Women's Interlink Foundation, might be the most remarkable woman I have ever met. During her 50 years doing this work, she has implemented over 35 innovative projects in India and continues to provide awareness, literacy, healthcare, nutrition, skill-development and income generation to thousands of disadvantaged women and children. Her focus on communication and collaboration has been key to her success, and making jewelry with Aloka's girls at a Made by Survivors location was a joy.

Kolkata Sanved is extremely well-aligned with Off the Mat, empowering women through dance therapy. Everyone was elated as we danced and sang together, and watching one of the young dance instructors teach a large group of prostitutes' children to dance and express their emotions was heartwarming. We joined Kolkata Sanved in the One Billion Rising rally for women's rights that was held worldwide in response to the recent gang rape in Delhi. We emphatically sang, danced and marched with hundreds of women and men in honor of the one in three women worldwide who have been victims of violence and abuse.

We were all smiles while singing and dancing with the adorable nuns dressed in orange and the 18 young girls of AMURT at the Ananda Marga Children's Home in Narendrepur. Parentless, these girls would likely be trafficked if they were not living under the loving care of the nuns.

Despite my apprehension, I experienced divine awe, inspiration and gratitude in India. I am so grateful for everyone from Off the Mat, the trip organizers at the Village Experience, the passionate leaders we worked with in India, and for the Half the Sky movement for bringing women's empowerment into the spotlight. Now is the time to let it shine.

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Evelyn Windhager Swanson  
TechnoServe, Global Advisory Council & Chairman  
TNS Europe, Chairman  
Environmental Defense Fund, Former Employee  
Yale College 1981

I took a circuitous but satisfying route to the NGO world. Not sure what I wanted to do with my ‘81 Economics & Political Science BA, I spent a few more years in academia, then business school and then Wall Street. By 1990, I’d had enough of finance, which had helped repay my student loans but was philosophically unsatisfying. I still wasn’t sure how I was going to do it, but I knew that I wanted to “make a difference” with my life somewhere and somehow. Through a variety of volunteer activities, which included working on the island of Dominica with some of the last Carib Indians, and filming a fundraising video at the Ponape Agricultural and Trade School in Micronesia, I found my way to the Environmental Defense Fund (edf.org) and TechnoServe (technoserve.org). As an MBA, I was attracted to these two organizations for the same reason: each pioneered using market-based approaches to solving (respectively) environmental and economic problems. Furthermore, my education and practical business experience provided me with skills useful to each organization.

EDF was the first environmental advocacy organization to work with companies rather than against them. Notably, EDF teamed up with McDonalds, FedEx and Wal-Mart, to help these corporations solve environmental challenges while reducing costs and increasing efficiency. At EDF, I discovered that writing environmental grant applications was actually not that different from selling derivatives. I found myself using the same analytical skills, which I had honed while designing complicated financial instruments. Many of EDF’s programs, like our carbon tax initiative, drew on my economics training and required thorough analysis and repackaging in order to create grant applications comprehensible by laymen. My financial background was also useful as we expanded our planned giving department. Finally, as a woman, I also found that my business education combined with Wall Street experience was relatively new in the not-for-profit world – which seemed to enhance my credibility amongst some of the more conservative trustees and donors.

Simultaneously, I was becoming an active volunteer with TechnoServe. First introduced to the organization by a Wharton classmate, I was immediately intrigued by TNS’s use of business techniques to address global poverty. By linking people to information, capital and markets for their products, TNS’s work is able to help hardworking people everywhere generate income, jobs and wealth for their families and communities. In order to be a more effective ambassador and fundraiser, I spent time in pre-genocide Rwanda, learning about TNS’s projects first hand. Like many others who have spent time “in the field”, I was stunned and invigorated by the fact that so little organizational, managerial and technical assistance can generate such dramatic successes in the developing world.

I left my full-time position with EDF in ’96 when our daughter was born and we began moving around Europe for my husband’s budding Internet career. As a “trailing spouse” in countries with limited employment opportunities, I was eager to continue to be useful in to TNS in a volunteer capacity.
fundraised and advocated on TNS’s behalf, and occasionally visited projects. While I clearly “lost out” on hard career opportunities by “just volunteering”, I was able to remain engaged with TNS and maintain the flexibility I needed to manage our family’s eight moves through five different countries and seven different schools.

Since our children entered middle school and we returned to London in ’08, I have redoubled my efforts with TechnoServe. I currently hold two board positions with TechnoServe: Chairman of the Global Advisory Council and Chairman of TNS Europe. These leadership roles are providing me with a chance to step up my responsibilities precisely as I have more time to do so. As we move towards TNS’s 50th anniversary in 2018, it is gratifying to know that I already have over 23 years of continuity with the organization. While I have complemented TNS activities with volunteer work at my children’s schools and with other fundraising activities, I am convinced that building institutional knowledge, networks and skills with one organization has helped me become a more effective volunteer.

Some closing thoughts: While at Yale, I never expected that I’d enter the not-for-profit world, let alone that I’d “toss” a fulltime career for family. However, I’ve grown to appreciate that just because a position is “underpaid” or not paid at all does not mean it’s not satisfying – moreover some of the most important and urgent problems in the world simply would not be addressed without volunteer brain & manpower.

On another note, the last decades have seen a dramatic increase in the number of not-for-profits that use market forces to achieve their goals, as well as a great number of new business ventures that incorporate a “social impact” component. In some cases, “social entrepreneurship” can provide the opportunity to “do good” while “doing well” (making money). In other words, the choice I had to make in the 1980s between following a burning desire to generate positive change or paying bills may not be one that a 21st century Yale grad has to make!

Finally, any undergrad interested in learning more about volunteering with TNS in the future, please see: http://www.technoserve.org/get-involved/volunteer. Volunteer Consultants (VolCons) generally have a minimum of two to three years of full-time work experience, typically, though not exclusively, in management consulting, financial services or corporate strategy. Being a VolCon may not be an option for you now, but may be something to consider in the future.

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MICROFINANCE

Carrie Nguyen
Kiva.org, Fellow
Yale College 2009

Last year I did a Non-Profit Fellowship with Kiva.org, a microfinance nonprofit that connects lenders with borrowers through $25 microloans. My 4-month volunteer stint took me first to San Francisco, then... hold your breath... 3,400 meters up in the air to Cusco, Peru.

The beauty of the Andean mountains instantly blew me away. I felt like I stood at the crossroads of time. Just around the corner from a 700-year-old Incan wall sat McDonald’s and KFC. In the same market where rural women wearing felt hats and double braids sold their wares, teenagers chatted on cell phones. A constant bustle of activity filled the Plaza de Armas, especially on weekends when local dance troupes paraded around the square in colorful costumes to the festive, wailing tones of traditional Peruvian music.

As a Kiva volunteer, I spent a lot of time meeting microfinance clients who also found themselves caught up in the transition to a modern economy. Many had very simple aspirations: “to put food on my table” or “to continue working” – in Peru, the notion of an extra home or a luxury vacation has yet to make it to the mountaintops. A lot of the clients I interviewed were taxi drivers or street food and market vendors. A few were very ambitious. These enterprising few are usually portrayed as microfinance success stories, but I learned that there is more than meets the eye. One borrower, Olivia, led me on a tour of her husband’s carpentry workshop as well as the new elementary school for which they were building 400 child-sized desks and chairs. She told me that finding working capital was a constant struggle: Even though they had the order in hand, they could not get enough loans to buy materials such as wood and paint. Kiva’s local partner was only one of several institutions she had approached.

Typically, I met borrowers in group settings. An individual might borrow anywhere from $50 to $1,000 (or more), but it is her group that guarantees repayment. Every week, I accompanied loan officers to their clients’ monthly “village bank” meetings. There is nothing like crowding onto a standing-room only bus with a $5,000 wad of cash for a 1-hour ride into the countryside, hoping that nothing goes awry. I was amazed to watch one of the officers casually stuff the bills into her backpack. I thought to myself, That’s 30x my rent in Cusco! Most of the loan officers are women, and they travel solo everyday throughout the city and rural areas to disburse loans and collect repayments. They put their lives at risk because they know they are doing important work.

Prospective lenders typically feel outraged when they see the annual interest rates charged by Kiva’s microfinance partners. The institution I worked with charges about 36%. Even more shocking is the rate in Mexico, typically 80% and up. However, these rates reflect the cost of delivering services to populations that often live in remote zones. Furthermore, despite the high interest rates, many of my field partner’s clients were repeat clients. They said that microloans helped them save money by
allowing them to receive discounts for bulk purchases or cash payments. Many women hoped to gradually increase the size of their loans so they could grow their businesses with each round of financing. They knew that alternative cash sources from suppliers or loan sharks, for example, would be even more costly.

Beyond traditional microfinance institutions, Kiva is leading innovation in its sector by more recently partnering with educational institutions and social enterprises to offer loans, and even pioneering direct person-to-person lending through the Kiva Zip platform. More than anything, I am inspired by Kiva’s ability to unite people from distinct walks of life and different parts of the world in a common cause; when a Kiva lender selects a borrower to fund, both become protagonists in the story of economic development.

Today I continue supporting Kiva by helping review and translate Spanish loans. I attend Kiva events in the city and am proud to be part of an adventurous, tight-knit and supportive group of alumni who are still naïve enough to chase after pie-in-the-sky ideals, and believe that we can make the world a better place.

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NONPROFIT CONSULTING

Vivien Hoexter
Hoexter Executive Consulting, Principal
Yale College 1982

When I graduated from Yale, I did not know what I wanted to do with my life. The country was in recession, and it took me several months to find a job – as a Christmas Executive at Lord & Taylor. Retail runs in my family, so I thought I would give it a shot. I lasted 18 months in the executive training program, during which I spent many hours in my sneakers in the stock room. Retail was clearly not for me.

Not knowing what to do next, I enrolled in business school and concentrated on marketing. I did not like B-school, but it did double my earning power in two years. I do not regret going, because it taught me to work in a team, and it taught me the language of business.

When I graduated I went to work for Best Foods, in brand management. I liked certain things about it but soon discovered that I could not have cared less whether we sold another million cases of Skippy Peanut Butter the following year. I was advised to stay at Best Foods until I reached the level of Product Manager, and that is what I did.
Through career counseling (the first of four times), I discovered that I am mission driven and must care passionately about the product or service that I am marketing or selling. This led me straight to the nonprofit world, and in 1993 I left Best Foods and went to work for The Hunger Project, the first of four nonprofits for which I have worked full-time. I became Director of Development – without any fundraising experience – because THP was too small to have a marketing department.

Having learned individual fundraising, I went on to eight years as a Vice President at AFS Intercultural Programs/USA, a large international high school exchange organization. I loved working at AFS. I have always been intrigued by other languages and cultures, and AFS operates in 55 countries. At AFS, I had a terrific boss, the president, who rotated me through many different assignments, as often happens in big corporations but almost never happens in nonprofits. At various points in time, I managed the fundraising, planning, marketing, information technology, and human resources departments. Planning was my favorite.

In 2005, I decided that I was ready for a change, and I sought out executive recruiters who were looking for CEOs for mid-sized nonprofits. I had always thought I wanted to be a CEO, and it seemed like the time was right. I was fortunate to land a job at Gilda’s Club Worldwide, which provides emotional and social support to people with cancer, their families and friends. There are about 30 Gilda’s Clubs in North America, and throughout my first year on the job I visited every single one of them. It was exhausting and exhilarating. I also initiated a planning process, and using the programs in the plan we were able to double revenue in two years. I moved the office from one space to another, a project I enjoyed because I had a really good project manager assisting me.

When the recession hit hard in 2008, the Gilda’s Club Board decided to merge the organization with The Wellness Community, a similar organization based in Washington, DC. Mergers are rare in the nonprofit space, but it turns out that the Boards of these two organizations had tried twice before I arrived to merge, and each time the volunteers made such an outcry that they stopped. The recession provided an excellent excuse.

I held one more staff job after that, at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, as Vice President for Marketing and Development. I learned a lot about higher education but decided I was finished with development jobs and, with the support of my husband and yet another coach, I started my own nonprofit consulting firm in 2011. I did not think I would like having my own business, but I LOVE it. I am happier now professionally than I have been in many years. The anxiety of not knowing where the next clients are going to come from is hard, but it is the only real downside.

I have had clients since two months after I hung out my shingle, and I employ a part-time bookkeeper and a part-time assistant. I do mostly strategy consulting, helping clients figure out where they want their organizations to go and how they can get there once they have a direction. I sometimes recruit staff members for them, because once they have new strategies they may need new positions filled, but the strategy is my favorite thing to do.

I have had an unusual path, perhaps, but one that is more and more common. People make their way from the for-profit to nonprofit worlds much more easily and readily these days. I recommend that you
consider the nonprofit world from the start, particularly if you are passionate about changing the world. I am happy that I found my way to it.

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**RELIGIOUS**

**Drew Collins**  
**Tony Blair Faith Foundation, Former Manager**  
**Yale College 2007**  
**Yale Divinity School 2010**

I spent seven years at Yale, the first four as an undergraduate majoring in Religious Studies, the next three at the Divinity School pursuing my Master of Divinity degree. Having decided that neither academia nor ecclesial careers were of interest, I turned to the only other place I knew the **content** of my liberal arts education would be put to use - the nonprofit sector. In a time in which the value of the humanities is constantly called into question, and in which a negative answer to this question often seems a foregone conclusion during the search for employment, the world of nonprofits offers students of the various humanities shelter from the storm.

For me, with a background in religious studies and theology, I found a natural fit at the Tony Blair Faith Foundation (TBFF). This was made even easier as the TBFF had begun a close and long-term relationship with Yale University that included Tony Blair lecturing a class there for three consecutive years. I was lucky enough to have been accepted into the first iteration of the class. I was also lucky enough to have been given an internship at the TBFF's London office the summer before the class. The following year, I was able to receive credit at YDS for a joint internship hosted by the TBFF and the Yale Chaplain's office during the academic year.

This underlines one of the most important aspects of applying for work in the world of nonprofits - they all want to work with a university like Yale. While I benefited from a budding relationship that took shape independently of me, there is very little preventing a forward-thinking Yale from contacting a nonprofit during their penultimate year (if not before), and suggesting they help establish a presence for that organization on Yale's campus. Nonprofits rely on institutions like Yale in a myriad of ways. Yale students are therefore incredibly well placed to begin a relationship with these kinds of organizations well in advance of their graduation and the oppression of post-graduation job searches. You can also use this as an opportunity to investigate individual organizations, getting a closer look at whether they are the kinds of places you'd like to work after graduation.

The Tony Blair Faith Foundation is a remarkable organization and one for which I am incredibly proud to have worked. And working there also gave me the opportunity to form relationships with academics from top research universities around the world, in places such as Hong Kong, Sierra Leone, Mexico,
Canada...even Harvard. This was a huge help when I decided that academic and ecclesial work was in fact where I wanted to be, and where I find myself today.

Nonprofits today are in many ways the natural allies of those educated in the liberal arts - they are multidisciplinary bodies that seek to synthesize disparate sources of information into a cogent and practical plan of action. My choice to pursue a career in the nonprofit sector is one for which I will be eternally grateful, and one which I would strongly commend to others.

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Christopher J. Doucet
Hartford Catholic Worker, Founder
MAR Yale Divinity 2007

I am one of the founders of the Hartford Catholic Worker (HCW). The HCW is a community of Catholics and like-minded friends who live and work in the north end of Hartford. The north end is among the poorest neighborhoods in America and, aside from members of our community, it is a neighborhood where white people do not live or visit. Our work at the HCW is to overcome this radical isolation by facilitating and nurturing relationships that bridge gender, generational, geographical, racial, and class divisions. We do so by actively seeking folks from beyond our neighborhood to join us in seeking right relationships, i.e. shalom, with the children of our neighborhood. At the HCW a diverse community gathers throughout the week to do homework and art work, to prepare and share meals, to play, to pray, to laugh, love and learn.

We are seeking people who are looking to practice cooperation rather than competition, nonviolence over violence, compassion rather than vengeance, and sharing rather than accumulating. We are seeking people from beyond this neighborhood who are interested in partnering with the folks of this neighborhood in the project of human liberation by seeking just solutions to the systemic problems of our society. We believe that by seeking right relationships with people on the margins of society the privileged among us are able to gain a perspective that they are otherwise blind to; a perspective that not only illuminates their privilege but also reveals the inadequacy of charity as a response to the violence of poverty. Charity is not only insufficient it is also demeaning to the dignity of those who rely upon it. We have come to this conclusion after twenty years of listening and observing and we would go so far as to say that the pride experienced by the giver in a charitable exchange is directly proportional to the humiliation of the recipient- this is especially so when the exchange is done outside of the context of a meaningful relationship.

We are not a typical nonprofit organization. Though we were founded in 1993 we have only had 501c3 status since 2011 after the IRS inquired about our business. We are not a business. The Hartford Catholic Worker is part of a broader movement begun by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin in New York in 1933. They explicitly chose to create an "organism not an organization" and they never sought government benefit, funding or permission to do the work of loving their neighbors. We welcome inquiries about joining our community as a live in member or as an extended member who helps out after school or on Saturdays. To learn more about us please visit our website www.hartfordcatholicworker.org.
Please work and pray for peace with justice, justice with mercy and life with dignity for all of God's children.

www.hartfordcatholicworker.org

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SOCIAL IMPACT

Jennifer D. Field
GLG Social Impact, Leader
Formerly at Goldman Sachs Foundation
Yale College 2001

Since I officially entered the workforce upon graduation from Yale College in 2001, I have observed a few trends regarding careers and making a social impact which I would like to offer. The first is somewhat subjective -- but I have increasingly found that the most interesting careers are often non-linear. Some people hark back to easier days when professionals spent +25 years in one company, but in today's world, with constant changes in demographics, borders, markets, industries, gender roles, and more, the linear career is much less common. I believe that as talented professionals transition between organizations and sectors, they take skills from previous roles to new ones which ultimately strengthen overall capacity.

I have also observed that sometimes opportunity knocks. This can certainly be said of my career. Just weeks before my Yale graduation in May 2001, I had accepted a job in financial services in the Bay Area. I was excited to live with great friends in a beautiful city, to make a decent salary to afford a nice lifestyle, and generally to remain in the privileged bubble in which I had been existing. However, just two weeks before graduation, my knock came in the form of an opportunity to join the Office of Vice President Dick Cheney early on in the Bush-Cheney Administration. Despite not knowing what GOP stood for or how many Senators there were in Congress, I realized that such an opportunity to serve my country might not come along again. What I thought would be a brief stint in Washington, DC turned into five years in the Bush-Cheney Administration during an incredibly challenging time in our country and world.

As Vice President Cheney's Personal Aide in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and throughout the 2004 Bush-Cheney reelection campaign, I was exposed to the breadth and depth of local, state, national and international challenges that exist. To say that those four years were an education is an understatement. I was fortunate to have a window into the world and into history – and the experience changed the trajectory of my career.
One of my greatest takeaways was that I knew I had to commit my career to making a positive impact in the world. I was not going into finance as originally planned, but the government was not a long-term place for me either. This leads to my second observation, which is that the most effective people I had interacted with at the White House were those that could operate within both the public and private sectors. In my view, there was immense value in understanding how the two sectors can effectively collaborate to advance social progress. I knew I wanted to get into the private sector.

I enrolled in an MBA program and quickly immersed myself in the nascent field of corporate philanthropy. The notion of the ‘competitive advantage of corporate philanthropy’ and the positive role that business could play in advancing social good was an exciting hybrid of my interests. I believe in capitalism and hypothesized that working in a company with a progressive view of philanthropy as creating value for society, customers and shareholders would provide the resources, brand and platform from which I could affect positive change. This would also enable me to afford the salary and benefits I wanted.

Upon graduation from Kellogg School of Management in August 2008, I joined Goldman Sachs to work in the Foundation. You might recall the events of August 2008 and the subsequent meltdown of global financial markets. Goldman Sachs remained entirely supportive of its philanthropic initiatives and, in fact, committed approximately hundreds of millions of dollars to our charitable division during those tough years. The majority of my focus was on a newly-launched global women’s economic empowerment program called 10,000 Women. 10,000 Women is a campaign to provide business and management training to 10,000 underserved female entrepreneurs around the world within five years. I spent time developing the program, working with and funding academic and nonprofit partners, visiting incredible women entrepreneurs and their businesses all around the world, measuring qualitative and quantitative impact -- and making the program relevant to Goldman Sachs stakeholders.

After four and a half years and close to 400,000 airline miles, I resigned from Goldman Sachs to join a smaller company called the Gerson Lehrman Group (GLG) to develop, launch and implement an initiative to leverage GLG’s corporate resources to create positive social change. GLG is the world’s largest membership-based network for professional learning and expertise founded fifteen years ago to service Wall Street investors in need of primary research. What started as an informal network of healthcare experts has grown over the last 15 years to include over 350,000 subject matter and functional experts who advise +1,000 private sector clients. Experts span the globe, ranging from doctors to engineers, from lawyers to policymakers, from former Heads of State to independent consultants. GLG clients include financial services companies, consultancies, corporations and law firms.

Through GLG Social Impact, the initiative I lead, we partner with individuals and organizations committed to creating positive social change on both the local and global level. We pair these changemakers with leading professionals in our network to ask questions, gain new perspectives and test ideas. For instance, a social entrepreneur building a low-cost, fuel efficient vehicle in Kenya might want to speak with former executives from North American auto manufacturers. An education nonprofit leader might want to speak with a university
professor about trends in a certain population’s test scores. An organization that employs women artisans in emerging economies to make high-end women’s apparel might benefit from speaking to the former head of merchandising at a luxury fashion house. These are all real examples of how we facilitate the dissemination and exchange of expertise to build the capacity and accelerate the impact of social sector organizations.

It has been exciting to bring a new service to the social sector. Nonprofit organizations can go to foundations and donors for money, consultancies for business and growth plans, and volunteers for pro bono, skills-based project work. However, there is no place for nonprofit leaders to turn to access premium expertise in an efficient, on-demand, confidential setting. Further, the initiative is scalable given the breadth of our network and the proprietary technology we have built over the past fifteen years. Lastly, and in line with one of my themes, the challenges our world faces are increasingly complex and require collaboration between the public and private sectors. GLG Social Impact is facilitating this dialogue by connecting top professionals from all industries to leverage their unique domain expertise for social change.

In closing, you can create positive social change from a variety of roles and organizations – it is important to find an environment that works for you as an individual. For me, it is the philanthropic or CSF function within a company. For some, it is making Managing Director in investment banking or partner in a law firm and serving on nonprofit boards along the way. For others, it is being in a mission-based nonprofit for life. And for others yet, it is transitioning betwixt and between. A critical part is taking care to cultivate your network along the way. Fortunately for you and me, the Yale community offers very fertile ground.

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**YOUTH**

**Polly Mygatt**
**Good Shepherd Services, Director of Model Fidelity for Family Foster Care**
**Yale College 2007**

As the Director of Model Fidelity at Good Shepherd Services in New York City, I get to work on some interesting and important questions: What kinds of support best prepare youth to succeed in school and life? What can we learn—from both research and experience—about how foster care agencies can most effectively work together with families? How do we know if we’re making a difference?

A windy yet purposeful path led me to my current role. I entered my senior year at Yale planning to look for work in the nonprofit sector but knowing little about the types of jobs available. I had participated in
social justice and education-related activities during college, and a Dwight Hall summer fellowship at Community Mediation, Inc. in New Haven had solidified my interest in creative approaches to conflict resolution.

In an interesting twist, my experience at Community Mediation led me to a consulting firm focused on change management and collaboration in mission-driven organizations. Two years there taught me that I was strongly drawn to nonprofit work involving children and youth, and that if I wanted to contribute as a manager or policymaker in this arena, I needed to understand the direct services aspects of it first.

So, I moved to Brooklyn and started a social work job in child welfare. Social work was hard, rewarding, and never dull. I met some of the most inspiring people I know, and I came to understand some of the daily tolls that poverty and inequality can take on families and kids. I thought about going to graduate school for social work, but eventually decided that my skills were better suited for bigger-picture roles.

At New York University, I found a graduate school—the Wagner School—dedicated to all types of public service. While I studied nonprofit management, I also enjoyed being surrounded by students of urban planning, education policy, international development and hospital administration. (So many fields to consider!)

Wagner got me interested in performance management, among other topics. Nonprofits are being asked to demonstrate their impact in increasingly scientific ways, using research-based approaches and reporting their results in numbers and percentages. This can be an opportunity—there’s a lot we can learn from data—but it can also be a huge challenge, since life is beautiful and messy in ways that Excel will never be able to capture. I’m lucky to work at the intersection of these realities, trying to make sense of research and use it to support kids and families in their daily lives.

Many people helped me get here, and the best way I can thank them is help someone else. So please feel free to contact me if I can assist with your career exploration.

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John O’Donnell
One Thousand Bears Project, Creative Director
Yale College 1974

Doing something in the non-profit sector should be part of each Yale graduate’s career plan, I would like to suggest.

After entering the for-profit business world following my graduation from business school several years after Yale, I began to be approached by a number of industry-supported charity groups seeking donations and commitments of time. I thus came to realize that many industries seem to support a number of specific charities which have relevance to that particular industry.
My first piece of advice to Yale students is to take seek out and take part in these industry-centered charity groups at the start of your career. If you do a good job for these charities, they will prove to be excellent networking opportunities, and will connect you to many people in your industry with whom you would otherwise not interact. An example of “Do well by doing good,” as they say.

Because I’m an entrepreneur, I decided to create some charity events on my own. I spent several years creating and running fundraising events of my own design, and donating the funds we raised to such established charities as the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation. Creating charitable events from scratch require many of the same skills required for launching companies, so for me it was a very enjoyable experience. Once again, the opportunity to meet new people, both in my industry and outside it, was one of the benefits. I recommend this approach to any Yalie looking for a chance to do something entirely different from one’s day job, as a way to expand your skill set and gain new experiences.

I am currently involved in a start-up charity campaign, One Thousand Bears Project, which uses teddy bears to put smiles on people’s faces. We photograph teddy bears around the world, and then publish extremely limited edition, fine art photographic prints which we donate directly to children’s hospitals and hospices. If someone wishes to purchase a print for their private collection, we donate half of the revenues to a charity which donates teddy bears to children in need. Our prints are exhibited in the Cleveland Clinic, the Children’s Hospital of Michigan, the University of Chicago Medical Facility, the University of California at Santa Barbara, and other locations in the US, South America, and Japan. We do this because we believe that a happy mental attitude helps the healing process, and because we receive so many comments like these from hospitals and clinics:

“I smile every time I walk by the room!”

“The print brightens the room and conveys a feeling of hope and joy.”

“I hope you know the impact that this very generous donation will have on our patients. Having such a fun (and interesting) work of art to look at when they come here, will change the whole visit. Instead of worrying about what is to come (which often times is not pleasant) they will be smiling and trying to figure out the story behind such a thing.”

I have no advice concerning actually earning a living in the non-profit world, however, because all of my charitable work has been an adjunct to my for-profit work as a venture capitalist. (We have had many non-profits in our portfolio, but they weren’t intended to be so!) I believe that anyone who graduated from Yale lives in a privileged state compared to most of humanity, and I think we have a duty to help others who may be less privileged. My experience suggests that over the long term, doing this via a commitment of your own time, focused on an activity of personal interest to yourself, is generally a more satisfying approach than just writing checks.
If anyone would like to follow the adventures of our bears, their Facebook page is “John.Charles.1000Bears”. If you smile, then friend us!

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**Ted Smith**  
**New Heights Youth, Inc., Executive Director**  
**Yale College 2000**

Growing up, my passions were always sports and working with young people. Throughout my college days, I never had a clear direction or path of what I wanted to do after I graduated. However, I knew I wanted those two aspects to be connected to my future career.

During my time at Yale, I was a member of the basketball team, and once I graduated I was fortunate enough to be able to play professional basketball in England for five years. Throughout my professional playing days, in the back of my mind I still realized I had to forge a new career path and find a “real job” once my basketball playing days were over.

When I would come home to New York City during the summer off-season months, I would research and network to learn more about careers and opportunities involving sports, education and youth work. Given that I didn’t want to go work directly in the school system, as a teacher or administrator, I somewhat stumbled upon the field of non-profit organizations. I found that there were a range of afterschool and summer programs that provided opportunities and enrichment to youth across NYC that didn’t involve being in a school (at the time I was definitely not a morning person, so the thought of being in a school by 7am or earlier did not appeal to me at all!).

As I explored further, I realized there were a wide range of programs and organizations that impacted youth on many levels. There were programs focusing on the arts, reading, sciences, music, sports and a host of other areas. I was clearly drawn to basketball, and I wanted to find a place that used basketball and the power of sports to impact young people on and off the court – using the life lessons and skills learned there that helped shape my life and experience, and using that passion to develop an appreciation for the importance of academic achievement and forging a path to college.

I was fortunate to find a small program in its infancy based in Washington Heights called New Heights. The organization’s mission was to inspire promising inner-city youth to be leaders, champions and student-athletes and empower them to be successful in high school, college and life. That mission and work really resonated with me, and I felt like this was a place that I could enjoy going to work at every day. It was somewhat of a leap of faith for both me and the organization’s founder, Nick Blatchford, as I came onboard as the first full-time employee with him.

I am about to begin my ninth year with the organization, and I can definitely say that no two days have been the same. As most people in the non-profit world can attest, you are forced to wear many different hats and learn a wide range of skills very quickly. I enjoy the fast-paced work environment and the opportunity to learn new things I never imagined tackling. I started out as a Program Director focusing primarily on program design and direct work with youth. As the organization grew and I transitioned into the Executive Director role, I have had to take on many new responsibilities and learn
on the job. I have been involved in strategic planning, budgeting, fundraising, HR, finance and operations, management, and a whole host of other areas.

For those considering the non-profit field, I can say that it is a great career option because it enables you to develop a wide range of professional skills that are transferable to any field. More importantly, I can say that I enjoy my career (most days) because my work directly impacts the lives of the 200 young people that New Heights serves.

As advice for those considering career options, I would say to pursue your passions. The non-profit world is vast and can afford many opportunities to find a path that can motivate and inspire you.

For more information about New Heights, you can visit www.newheightsnyc.org.

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BOARD MEMBERS/VOLUNTEERS

Liz Brayboy
Yale Polo, Non-profit Board Service and Alumni Advisor
Yale College 1984

During my time as an undergraduate at Yale, I became very involved in the polo team, assuming responsibility for running the program when I was a sophomore. As a club sport, it was student run. The university supported the program by providing the facility (the Yale Armory) and staff to care for the horses. After graduating, I stayed connected, but drifted away as graduate school and career took me elsewhere in the country. When I ultimately moved back to Connecticut for work, I looked for opportunities to get back into riding and ideally to playing polo. Because of the cost of owning horses, I had to look for ways to “trade” my experience or work for others to get back in the saddle. I was able to make it work, but didn’t have the time to be fully involved.

After 10 years with Deloitte Consulting, much of that on the road traveling to client sites and running projects with large insurance companies, I was finally able to go on my own and establish a slightly less hectic lifestyle. This allowed me the time to get back into volunteer work and community service. It also meant I didn’t have the income to pay to play polo, so I began teaching lessons and ran the interscholastic program at Yale to give me a chance to spend time with horses again.

In June 2009, the Yale administration unexpectedly announced its decision to close the stable portion of the Armory. The closure was motivated by the economic downturn, as well as the cost of maintaining the facility and supporting the polo program. The barn staff and manager were notified that they would be let go or moved to other roles and that the horses would need to be sold. Fortunately, an Alumni Board had been recently formed to begin working with the university to provide better oversight for the program. The Board stepped up and offered to work with the university to preserve the program. We
established a 501c3 (critical to being able to accept financial contributions and the donation of horses) and found a new location for the remaining 15 horses and equipment.

As one of the few Board members located in Connecticut and the one most actively involved in the program at the time, I offered to assume additional responsibilities. This is a volunteer position with a heavy commitment and one which I view as a second job (maybe some days my primary job!). I am responsible for overseeing the care and placement of the horses and serve as an alumni advisor to the undergraduates that manage the club. They handle game scheduling, team management and exercising the horses. I also teach the beginner lessons which are open to undergrads, grad students and other members of the Yale community. In addition, there are competing teams and club play for adults and others in the area. We also still have the high school program.

Over the past 4 years, we have been searching for a new location for the program – one which could provide a co-located arena and stables so that we don’t have to trailer the horses to an arena for games. We are now in the process of reviewing sites and negotiating potential purchase or lease options. The Board includes alumni and friends of the program, spanning the class years from 1968 to 2006. Each member brings something to the Board, whether it be financial savvy, legal support for filing the 501c3, experience building polo programs or architectural skills. The mix of experiences and the commitment of the members make it an exciting group to work with and one which makes me feel my time is well spent.

I have been involved with other Boards over the years, but this probably best represents the power of being part of a Non-profit board: the opportunity to work hard for something you are passionate about, the chance to expand your own knowledge and skills and the excitement of being a part of something that is larger than you can sometimes imagine.

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Joseph DeNicola
Solar Youth, Board Chair
Yale College 1986
Yale F & ES 1996

My two+ decade career in finance has been challenging, rewarding and, most importantly, a great foundation for the pursuit of my passions. But it was not the result of a plan, at least not on my part. As with many of my classmates, Yale fostered a service ethic, and at the outset I considered several alternatives to finance including medicine and the military. When I elected to join a finance training program upon graduation, I thought I was sideling my interest in community service. But I soon learned there are multiple avenues to pursue these interests.

A few years after joining the Prudential Investment Company, a confluence of events introduced me to the concept of social enterprise. The company had received some negative publicity related to an investment in a Southeast Asia mine. There were environmental concerns and multiple complaints from
local indigenous people. We determined that many of the concerns pre-dated our investment, and our association with the controversy could have been avoided if these non-financial considerations had been vetted earlier. Also at this time, my interest in environmental issues led me to several “side roles” within the company. While continuing my day job as a portfolio manager, I assisted in the development of a recycling program and supported the social investment team on environmentally-related transactions, including a large loan to the Trust for Public Land. It soon occurred to me that there was a need for a corporate environmental responsibility program within the company. I convinced the leadership team that we could enhance the conventional corporate objective of maximizing profits (in this instance reducing the risk to profits was most persuasive) while providing environmental and social benefits to the broader community – a version of a social enterprise. Prudential sponsored my return to Yale for a Master’s in Environmental Studies, but a subsequent change in leadership put an end to the social enterprise initiative. Interestingly, a number of major financial institutions have since established similar programs.

I also have been involved in the formation and management of two companies each with a unique environmental / social objective. Partnering with a former Dean of the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies and several others, we formed a sustainable forestry company in Argentina in 1998. We hoped to show that the careful extraction of forest products is compatible with the ecology and needs of local people. While the operation got off to a good start, raising a significant amount of funding, the Argentina crisis that began in 1999 was our undoing. The company we built continues to operate as a local producer of forest products. I have also co-managed a joint venture between GE and another company. The joint venture developed projects that reduced or offset greenhouse gas emissions (for example, capturing and using methane emissions from landfills). We knew our revenues were largely reliant on federal legislation, but it looked very promising in 2008. The legislation never materialized and the joint venture ceased operations in 2010. New ventures come with many challenges, and a new social enterprise has additional complexities and barriers to success, but each offer tremendous rewards regardless of the eventual outcome.

While much of my energy has been devoted to these social enterprise activities and various finance jobs, I’ve found my time on non-profit boards over this period to be the most impactful. My initial exposure to board service occurred only a few years after graduation. Partly as a result of my environmentally related roles at Prudential, I was invited to join the board of the New Jersey Conservation Foundation. As with many non-profits, they were seeking representatives from local companies. At about this same time, I also became involved as the Treasurer of one the senior societies at Yale. More recently, I joined the board of Solar Youth, a New Haven-based non-profit formed by a FES classmate. I have been the board chair since 2012.

Fundamentally, the role of the board and each board member is governance of the organization (more simply, oversight). Practically, the board is involved in setting the strategic direction for the organization, fund raising, and management of the executive director, among other responsibilities. The specific role of a board member can vary quite a bit depending on the organization. The Solar Youth board is small and relatively hands-on. Given my professional experience, I am most involved in budgeting, fund-raising, and occasionally join meetings with various Solar Youth stakeholders. I also
attend as many program-related events with the youth as possible. One of my colleagues on the board, an attorney, helps arrange pro-bono legal services and advises on legal matters. A former assistant police chief on the board helped prepare a safety and security plan for our youth. What all boards have in common is the need for each board member to commit some amount of time, their knowledge, and their passion.

Board work is one of the most accessible service avenues for those working in the for-profit sector. It offers a direct way to give back while making use of skills gained in school or professional life. As there are a wide range of non-profits, nearly all of which need good board members, there is ample opportunity to align personal interests with board service. While my board training and that of many board members was “on-the-job,” there are now many other ways to gain knowledge useful to a board role including through local community foundations, the Yale Alumni Non-profit Alliance (YANA), and other organizations that can be found on the web.

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**Meryl Greenwald Gordon**

Jewish Foundation, Board Member

Hebrew High School, Founder

Yale College 1978

I graduated from Yale with a B.A. in Math and Philosophy and certification to teach 7th-12th grade math. I married a fellow Yalie several weeks later, and, unable to find a teaching position, I took a government job as a mathematician trainee, which meant they taught me computer programming. I soon left to work as a programmer for a consulting firm till my first son was born. My husband and I both worked part-time on different schedules, swapping the care of our son, till our daughter was born. Unable to “juggle” anymore, I left for the “mommy-track” and haven’t worked for pay since. I earned an M.S. in computer science, part-time over seven years, in between the birth of another son and other life events. I intended to go back to computer work, but that hasn’t happened, at least not yet.

Instead I found myself back in the field of education in various volunteer capacities. I started and edited a newsletter for my children’s school for 5 years; my husband and I founded and ran an after-school Hebrew high school for 5 years; I ran a parenting book fair for a nursery school one year; I ran an adult Jewish education event for 8 years; I have served for many years on the Board of Directors of my local Jewish Federation in various capacities (including Vice President of Outreach and Vice President of Education); I chair the advisory committee for our local Jewish newspaper and am responsible for the content of a monthly publication reaching 3,000 households.

I conceived a project for my Yale class’s 30th Reunion to survey how we managed "work-life balance", and worked with a Yale sociology professor, the AYA (Association of Yale Alumni), and another classmate to make that happen. For this effort I was pleased to receive the “AYA award in recognition of
distinguished service to the Yale College Class of 1978". One of our findings, to me a depressing finding, was that a quarter of my classmates had never had (or adopted) children. Sometimes this was because high-pressure careers took priority in life. Of those with children, many advised finding a career with "flexibility" as being key to managing work and life. Often careers in the non-profit world were mentioned as lending themselves to this greater flexibility.

I want to mention that sometimes only a relatively small amount of "seed money" is needed to start a non-profit. My husband and I "seeded" our Hebrew High School with a loan of $2,000 at a time when we wanted such an opportunity to exist for our teenagers, but the community at large was saying it wasn't economically feasible or necessary. Sometimes you have to step up and put your money where your mouth is.

I think the Yale experience empowers its graduates to go out and make new things happen, even when others say you "can't", and also instills a powerful ethic of "giving back". Many of my classmates have done this on a grand scale, in government, or international organizations, or in large corporations. For me, once I realized that my family (husband, children, and aging parents) is the most important priority in my life, my involvement has turned out to be in my local community, and it has often been both fun and rewarding.

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Rachel Berek Rader
Chappaqua School Foundation, Board Member
Pleasantville Cottage Schools, Volunteer and Steering Committee Member
Freelance Writer and Fundraiser
Yale College 1987

I was asked to write this narrative at a time in my life when I am facing many of the questions potential readers of this UCS/YANA resource are probably asking themselves as well: What am I good at? What is important to me? How can I help other people? How can I balance my life outside the home with my commitment to my family?

I graduated from Yale with a degree in English and had a decade-long career in book publishing doing publicity and marketing. I stopped working full-time when my oldest was eighteen months old, and had two more children in quick succession. I continued to do some freelance writing until my youngest was born, and then abandoned my professional life entirely for full-time, full-on parenthood. Eighteen years later, I have just sent my oldest child off to her freshman year at college, and I am ready to re-enter the work force.

I am fortunate that while raising my kids, I have also volunteered for several worthwhile and interesting organizations, and these opportunities have helped to steer me toward the beginnings of a new career in the non-profit sector. My volunteer efforts started small, local and personal – doing alumni interviews and raising money for Yale, being an elementary school class parent, chairing PTA
committees. My work in at my children’s schools led to an invitation to join the board of the Chappaqua School Foundation, a non-profit organization that was founded in 1993 to raise funds for innovative projects, programs and technology that can benefit our local public schools but cannot be covered by the school budget. We work closely with our school district’s teachers and administrators to identify both needs within the classroom and trends in education in order to improve our kids’ learning experience. We (and this is where I’ve devoted most of my efforts) also spend much of our time raising awareness and money for these endeavors. The goal: to make an already high-performing school district even better.

My volunteer work for the Chappaqua School Foundation, like my work for Yale, has been interesting and rewarding but, quite honestly, somewhat self-serving. I am giving back to organizations to which I have a personal connection and that quite frankly, do not serve people with immediate, pressing, needs. What it comes down to is that my family and I are fortunate in our socioeconomic situation, and others are not.

As my kids grew older, my sense that I needed to be involved in other kinds of volunteering grew stronger. Some combination of wanting to be a role model for my kids and also needing to get out of my suburban bubble pushed me to work with organizations having nothing to do with my life, or my children’s. The organization that is closest to my heart (and, ironically, closest to my home), is the Pleasantville Cottage Schools, a co-ed residential treatment center that serves several hundred emotionally troubled, primarily inner city kids whose families are, for all of the usual reasons – drugs, financial issues, domestic violence, jail time – unable to care for them. It is the only cottage-based residential facility in the country; while it is an undeniably an institution, kids live in houses with other children and staff and are helped by a remarkable team of psychologists, therapists, and residential caregivers who do an amazing job with these kids who have so little.

I started out as a “Lunch Bunch Lady,” visiting a cottage once a month with a group of other women and providing a good meal, a diverting activity, and most importantly, an hour of undivided attention to kids who have been let down repeatedly by the adults in their lives. After several years of spending time in various cottages, and getting my own kids involved, I was asked to join the Cottage School’s steering committee and to chair several of their fundraising events. I had originally loved my volunteer time at the Cottage School because of my interaction with the kids, and while that is still enormously fulfilling, I found that I also got great satisfaction from raising money to keep this amazing place afloat. This may sound cliché, but non-profit fundraising is a terrific way to use both your heart and your brain.

And it looks as though my volunteerism has led me to a nascent career in the non-profit sector. Through contacts I made at the Chappaqua School Foundation, this summer I connected with a local non-profit that focuses on affordable housing and wrote their annual report. And I am about to embark on a paid project for the Jewish Child Care Agency, which runs the Cottage Schools, helping run an awareness and fundraising campaign around the sexually abused and sexually trafficked children who live at the Cottage School and are helped by its programs. Back in the days when I was promoting celebrity
authors I could never have predicted that this would be my path, but it is incredibly rewarding to use my writing skills and powers of persuasion for a good cause.

I can be contacted at rbrader43@gmail.com

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Michael Skol
Transparency International USA, Former Board Member
Yale College 1963

I entered the U.S. Foreign Service in 1965, serving for just over 30 years, mostly in Latin America and the Caribbean, culminating as Ambassador to Venezuela (1990-93) and then Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Latin America (1993-96). During my last decade in the Service, I became very interested in the notion of how useful a concerted effort to reduce or eliminate governmental corruption could be in building prosperity for the poor and middle class alike in country after country (one respected estimate is that more funding for public services would be made available through the elimination of government corruption than what is provided by all national and international aid agencies combined!). I was the principal author of the "No to Corruption" Initiative at the 1994 Summit of the Americas in Miami and a leader in the group which created the 1996 Inter-American Convention Against Corruption, the first international agreement in this field.

I carried through this focus into the private sector after retiring from the State Department. The business I founded (Skol & Associates [Washington DC] and Skol, Serna & Ruiz [Bogotá and Medellín, Colombia] is engaged in anti-corruption and counter-money laundering services in the Latin American region. At the same time, I have devoted time to public speaking, media appearances and other efforts to promote the anti-corruption theme. Most notable for me was the years I spent as an (unpaid) board member of the U.S. Chapter of Transparency International (TI), arguably one of the most influential global non-governmental organizations. TI, founded in 1993 by a former regional director of the World Bank, is headquartered in Berlin and has chapters in dozens of countries. It develops tools for fighting corruption and works with other non-profit organizations and governments to implement them. It publicizes political and corporate corruption, publishes the well-received "Corruptions Perceptions Index", which ranks some 82 countries annually in terms of worldwide impressions of how corrupt they are, and provides "best practices" information for management in both the public and private sectors. Global and local efforts have resulted in increased awareness of the problem and in any number of actual improvements.

The U.S. Chapter is particularly significant because of the political heft of its corporate members (some of the biggest American multinationals) and the relative weight of its financial contribution to TI's global budget. As a board member, I regularly contributed to policy decisions, to efforts to influence Washington and other governments, and to the design of model systems of transparent governance. The experience provided a unique insight into how the private sector can intersect usefully with the
non-profit and how powerful a new (just 20 years old this year) organizational idea can be on the world stage. It also demonstrated that non-profit work need not necessarily be full-time; it can co-exist with other endeavors.

My work with TI-USA gave me a unique insight into how businesses and governments can work well – and how they so often don't, to the detriment of ordinary people throughout the world. TI and its corporate members, a prestigious combination, have made genuine global change possible, governmental camouflage of corruption less easy, and state-of-the art anti-corruption technology available to all who seek it. The rapid growth of TI has paralleled the explosion of for-profit sector focus on compliance and risk management, making this whole field one of the most exciting areas of social and economic progress.

TI-USA has a paid President, staff and interns, in Washington DC.

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