

Notes from Nick Ascienzo interview

**First Segment – about 20 minutes. 215.7 MB. Multi/Folder 1, Zoom 14.**

0:00 Nick talks about being born in Sacramento and growing up in Kingston in the 1960s - 1990s. Went to U Albany for teaching credentials and after his first interview was hired by Red Hook. Started in 1973 and retired in 2016. Had a business, a Dairy Queen franchise on the side.

3:07 In early 2019 he was involved with his father's estate, the family house and farm. Foundation was in its fifth year. As it turned out there were more opportunities because of Covid.

5:15 The Foundation was created in 2014, became a non-profit in 2015. Students were always part of the Foundation. Today has 49 students classified as Ambassadors. Three areas of focus 1) poverty alleviation 2) programming for the underserved 3) eldercare. In 2019 were looking to expand to local community.

7:30 The news of covid was profound. Concerned it was more than flu. Early part of 2020 was looking for directors – Fran Thompson and Jan Malinski (?). In early March was putting together a symposium for Mar 16 about how to alleviate poverty based on a NYT article we had all read. The meeting never happened. Instead we had to ask how to respond to covid. Dan Budd approached him for fiscal sponsorship so they signed an agreement so the Foundation could be their bank and the 'quiet' part, in the background, of addressing the challenge.

11:55 Before they had grants up to 10,000 and mini-grants of \$250 each and were all programmatic. After Covid, needs were infrastructure for those organizations trying to survive. Grants were up to \$20,000.

16:27 Local directors participated so Nick and others were helping with meal assembly not discounting anything.

18:00 Day to day – went from monthly to weekly meetings. They were therapeutic. Dan made sure Nick and Steve were up to speed on needs, meeting maybe every other day.

That was part of our relationship with Red Hook Responds... [Interview had to stop for a few seconds to replace SD card].

**Second Segment: 12:49 min. 135 MB. Multi/Folder 1/Zoom 2.**

So we were talking about day to day...

One of the last things before shutting down. Had made a presentation about Eleanor Roosevelt Foundation grant March 10 – last public thing they did.

Shift to new normal – was when zoom wasn't going to go away. Latter part of 2020. It took away all the spontaneity about how we reacted. Even with zoom spontaneity didn't exist even though distancing was part of all our lives

3:00 Found a way to get through the day. A runner/cyclist with bad knees, didn't like to walk. But did a lot of reading about the Artic and Antarctic late 19<sup>th</sup>, early 20<sup>th</sup> c exploration. Thought about those great expeditions how much freedom they had and how important leaders were. Felt his calling was to go himself – did in Dec 2023.

5:37 Lasting impacts – Exploration that was reading about was in lockstep with what we were going through as a community. We need leaders who step up and steer the ship. Dan Budd was able to be that intrepid explorer to create best possible journey in places we had never been. Not all communities were able to harness all the resources the way Red Hook did, so that the voices that are not always heard are listened to.

8:00 Orgs now have more impactful relationship with government now – we've been able to coordinate with town and village better – now the norm. Great take-away.

Most important thing that the Foundation learned is that every voice is not necessarily amplified – no matter how soft we have to listen. Because of our geographic footprint we were able to listen to the softer voices. It was good for the Foundation and its philanthropic concerns – expanded vision now.

Beyond students, there are so many wonderful leaders who are doing great work that we want to work with. All have their own voice – Red Hook has a great group of people who care for others - that will help us move forward in profound ways.