Beyond The Blog

Beyond The Blog is an evolution of The Patterson Foundation’s storytelling approach focused on creating and sharing engaging content featuring the people, organizations, and communities strengthened through the Foundation’s work.
Weaving Threads for a Vibrant Society

Learn more about The Patterson Foundation’s new approach to communications and storytelling
Dear Readers,

I hope you are enjoying The Patterson Foundation’s early editions of Beyond the Blog as much as our team has enjoyed creating them. As we brainstormed features for this third installment, we returned to the reason The Patterson Foundation originally committed to embracing this new medium: Our hope to share more stories of impact in ways that foster greater opportunities for everyone to participate in creating a world they aspire to live in.

We liken this focus on sharing and wide participation to swapping cookies in a cookie jar. Each one of us has our own collection of delicious cookies — or, in this case, the lessons learned through our own unique experiences in life. Keep the lid on your cookie jar long enough, and they are sure to go stale. But opening that jar and generously offering its contents invites others to enjoy what’s inside while inspiring them to open their own jars to those around them.

The Aspirations to Actions initiative focuses on creating spaces promoting this openness and sharing among people, organizations, and communities. For nine years, this initiative has helped create connections transcending different backgrounds and experiences to uncover the shared aspirations we each have for our region and pave a path toward making them a reality. Across our four-county region, we have witnessed the power of this approach to build trust and clarify how we can contribute our individual assets toward a greater goal.

In a time when many in our nation yearn for the opportunity to come together across divisions, The Patterson Foundation has a responsibility to open its cookie jar and share insights on strategies and approaches that can help others open their own. That obligation helped spark the stories you are about to dive into.

I hope you will come away with a renewed appreciation for your own unique, invaluable “cookies” and the opportunities to share more of them in your daily life.

With jars ever open,

Debra Jacobs, president and CEO of The Patterson Foundation
Weaving Threads for a Vibrant Society

By Rachel Hettinger & Kellie Alexander
Welcome to the third edition of Beyond The Blog, *Weaving Threads for a Vibrant Society*. If you are new, we are Rachel and Kellie, current fellows with The Patterson Foundation (TPF) and co-editors of Beyond The Blog (BTB), an evolution of TPF’s storytelling approach. If you haven’t already, dive into the second edition [here](#).

What does it mean to be respected? What role does respect play in creating a vibrant society?

TPF recognizes respect as a vital tool to advance a community forward. Although this recognition weaves its way throughout all our initiatives, the Aspirations to Actions initiative was created to focus on driving change in communities. Change happens at the speed of trust. To build trust, we must first build relationships. But to build strong “connective tissue,” we need to respect each other. When we respect each other, we can have meaningful conversations over any issue and find common ground. A path forward, leading toward change, can be built from there.

Aspirations to Actions works with people, businesses, nonprofits, government, and the media to create opportunities for purposeful engagement. The Patterson Foundation has learned that the power of a community exists...
learned that the power of a community exists in its people. Aspirations to Actions works to provide new ways to build trust through personal development, active engagement, and shared aspirations.

One of the ways we invite people to actively engage in the conversation is through the one-act play, Abraham Lincoln & Frederick Douglass, A Walk to Respect, written by our very own Beth Duda, with original spoken word poetry by Cedric Hameed.

This play was performed twice in February at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, followed by a panel discussion with the actors and production team. With the ever-evolving challenges of today and tomorrow, this play is timely as it focuses on how Lincoln and Douglass were, in fact, friends and found common ground even though they often didn’t agree on much. The sparsely known story can be used as a blueprint today on how to use respect as a tool to find a path forward across differences.

With the goal of spreading this message far and wide, a contest was created for TPFers to write an essay about what respect means to them, and the winner would get to go on the D.C. experience. The winner, Renée Isrel, wrote a beautiful essay on her relationship with learning what it means to respect others and yourself. "Gaining the respect of just one person in the community would lead to more opportunities" Dive into Renée's story to learn more.

Now we ask you, what does respect mean to you? What role do you see it playing in your community? It's okay if you don't know right
now, but keep those two questions in mind while you engage with this month's issue. Listen to our guest Karen Windon, a TPF consultant, who took part in the trip to Washington, D.C., share her perspective on the experience and what resonated with her after watching the play. Indulge in the experience TPFers had and brought to others while in D.C. Be on the lookout for TPFers in action, working on the "criticality of listening to others not through the lens of a label, but through the lens of humanity. Each person has much to say, and when we listen with an open heart, the common ground is easier to find and embrace."

We all just want to be seen and heard; the first step is respect. Grateful you are with us to Join the Journey, Beyond The Blog
Criticality of Listening

Interview with Karen Windon
Listening Through the Lens of Humanity

Rachel Hettinger interviews Karen Windon, consultant with The Patterson Foundation, on her experience and reflections from Abraham Lincoln & Frederick Douglass, A Walk to Respect in Washington, D.C. Click the play button in the grey bar to listen.

"The criticality of listening to others not through the lens of a label but through the lens of humanity: Each person has much to say, and when we listen with an open heart, the common ground is easier to find and embrace.

Karen Windon, Engagement Team, Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading

With many years of experience in the public sector, as well as years in the not for profit space, comes understanding of the incredible diversity of our world and the need to value that diversity. Realizing that everyone is formed by their different experiences and perspectives creates both a tolerance for and an appreciation of those varied insights, and will ultimately strengthen us, should we choose to open our hearts and our eyes.
Respect as a Critical Tool

Building a vibrant society by exploring respect
Abraham Lincoln & Frederick Douglass: A Walk to Respect, inspires the audience to comment and communicate about shared aspirations, authenticity, and the common good. The play launches meaningful thought and dialogue about connecting and communicating despite our differences. The power of this theatrical experience and the depth of the conversations it inspires prompted The Patterson Foundation to take the piece “on the road” to share with other communities. Thanks to Bill Wagy for capturing this content and developing it into a video to share far and wide.

The positive audience response in Washington, D.C., affirms our commitment to bringing this piece to communities interested in fostering relationships that can lead to positive change. This story of friendship between Lincoln & Douglass sets an important example of how a willingness to forge connections can create a better tomorrow.

[Image of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass]
Creating Spaces
Growing trust, connection, and change
Aspirations to Actions is an initiative of The Patterson Foundation but also an approach used in all of The Patterson Foundation's work to focus on creating spaces to grow trust, connection, and change. Here are just a few examples of how the power of a community exists in its people:

"Providing an insider's viewpoint into the Community Conversations in DeSoto County, FL, at the session hosted by Florida Civic Advance featuring Rich Harwood was validating to the work that has been in motion since late April 2022. Utilizing The Patterson Foundation's Aspirations to Actions initiative, 15 conversations with more than 325 people provided a unique aspirational perspective of what they want their community to look like. DeSoto's "Solutions to Actions" is making an impact by bringing people together to collectively work on the eight most shared aspirational themes to move their community forward." Cheri Coryea
Recently, TPF Fellow Connor LaGrange had the opportunity to join a national Campaign for Grade-Level Reading panel that centered on the emerging power of Remake Learning. Remake Learning, an organization out of Pittsburgh, exists to be a network that ignites engaging, relevant, and equitable learning practices in support of young people navigating rapid social and technological change. The panel – consisting of LaGrange, Melanie Claxton, Senior Program Officer at the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation, and Gregg Behr, Executive Director at The Grable Foundation and Co-Founder of Remake Learning – spoke to the power of letting learning happen everywhere. By working to rewrite institutional frameworks and governmental policies, funders around the country can embody the practices of Remake Learning by supporting organizations strengthening the impact for children in all different walks of life.

The Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading will present Suncoast Remake Learning Days, an exciting 10-day, free, regional learning festival from Friday, April 21–30, in Charlotte, DeSoto, Manatee, and Sarasota counties. All events are free and designed to be hands-on, relevant, and engaging educational experiences for youth of all ages (PreK through high school) and their families, caregivers, and educators.

**TPF's Digital Access for All initiative**

began with a multi-sector learning journey, exploring how thought leaders, government, businesses, and nonprofits operate and invest in the digital access space. After speaking to over 30 funders nationwide, TPF set out to unearth the strategies, approaches, successes, and challenges to discover who else cares. The findings consistently pointed to one overarching theme: "Addressing the pressing concerns that digital access touches everything we do as a society, regardless of a funder’s mission." On the heels of our findings, TPF co-hosts leaders in digital access to weave together national knowledge and foster space for knowledge sharing.

### Funder to Funder Workshops

**February 21**

12:30–2 PM ET

**Remake Learning: Philanthropic Opportunities for Enhancing Local Learning Landscapes**

**Panelists**

- Gregg Behr
- Melanie Claxton
- Connor LaGrange

### National Remake Learning Days

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Thank you for reading

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Join the Journey