

## **Remarks for Robert Eckardt**

### **“In the Public Interest: the Cleveland Foundation at 100”**

#### **Intown Club**

**Monday, Oct. 6, 2014**

Good afternoon. I'm delighted to be here at the invitation of Tana Carney, who served with distinction on the Cleveland Foundation's board for 10 years. Thanks to Tana and all of you for this opportunity to reflect on your community foundation as we enter the final quarter of our centennial year.

You were kind enough to make this platform available to our CEO, Ronn Richard, back in January of 2012, when we were still in the on-deck circle, awaiting our turn at bat in community philanthropy's Century League. As the world's first community foundation, we were hitting leadoff.

Now that we're rounding third and heading home – with less than 100 days remaining in our 100<sup>th</sup> season – it seems appropriate to take stock. So in the time allotted to me, I will offer some historical context leading up to this memorable year, describe how we have involved the community in our centennial celebration and share some thoughts on our second century.

It's important to understand that the foundation's story is Cleveland's story: 100 years of forging a stronger community; 100 years of uniting the resources and talents of our citizens to address our most urgent needs and improve the quality of life here.

Even if you don't always concur with our grantmaking priorities or the actions we take in multiple civic roles, I would assert that we are always true to the public interest, just as our founder, Frederick Harris Goff, intended. To be otherwise would breach our covenant with the people of this community and with generations of donors stretching back to Fred Goff. Our predecessors entrusted us with an honorable legacy, and our duty is to pass it on intact to those who follow us.

Whenever I discuss the Cleveland Foundation, I usually spend a few minutes covering the basics. I'm sure that this group – in which I recognize a number of our dedicated donors – is more familiar than most with the concept of a community foundation. Still, a brief refresher may be helpful.

A community foundation pools the charitable resources of citizens, both living and deceased, into one large, permanent endowment that earns interest and investment income – a big community savings account, if you will. That income is then distributed by a publicly appointed board to worthy nonprofit organizations working to enhance the community.

This was a revolutionary concept when the Cleveland Foundation was established. No other entity like this one existed anywhere. Back then, foundations were almost exclusively the private province of a handful of extremely wealthy men: Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller, for example.

For the first time, the community trust concept opened philanthropy to men and women of all income levels and from all walks of life. Whether they could give a little or a lot, donors could be assured that their dollars would be used wisely, and their legacy would continue long after they were gone. This remains our mantra today.

The credit for this novel concept goes to Frederick Harris Goff, who was not a native Clevelander – he came here as a child – but whose devotion to the city and its residents was absolute. Beyond his roles as a corporate lawyer, banker and civic leader, Fred Goff was a man of deep intelligence, integrity and creativity. He and his wife, Frances Southworth Goff, were the foundation's first donors. Frances was every inch her husband's intellectual equal. After his death in 1923, she served on the foundation's board for nearly two decades.

As an aside, this Cleveland power couple figures prominently in a PBS documentary on the Cleveland Foundation, which will air on WVIZ-TV at 10 p.m. Monday, October 20. I invite you to tune in.

In 1914, the Cleveland Foundation took root in the nation's sixth-largest city, which was well on its way to becoming the fifth-largest in 1920. One historian called it a "big, brawling, smelly, alive town, where commerce is king ... and the population keeps skyrocketing." Cleveland was a thriving urban center, known for its civic reforms and progressive government. As fertile ground for inventors and entrepreneurs pioneering new technologies, it was also emerging as a manufacturing powerhouse.

It's no coincidence that so many of Cleveland's premier cultural and civic institutions are marking their own centennials between 2010 and 2020. In the ferment of people, production, politics and new ideas of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, we see the origins of the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, the City Club of

Cleveland, the forerunner of the Urban League of Greater Cleveland and the Jewish Federation, to cite a woefully incomplete list.

I'm sure that you, like me, have wondered what it was like to be a Clevelander in that bygone era. It seems so exciting, so exhilarating. No doubt it was – but much less so if you lived in a filthy tenement, or labored for a pittance from dawn to dusk, or were jammed into an overcrowded classroom with other immigrant children who didn't speak English. As in other teeming American cities of the time, Cleveland had no dearth of social ills.

Lacking funds for grantmaking in the foundation's earliest years, Fred Goff committed to a series of surveys of pressing civic issues in hopes of stimulating public debate and reform. Ultimately, eight independent studies were commissioned and disseminated. While some yielded only modest results, the surveys on education, recreation and the criminal justice system were transformative.

And so, even before it dispersed a nickel in grants, the Cleveland Foundation stepped into a leadership role as a civic agenda setter and problem solver. Over the decades, we have also functioned as a public policy advocate, a think tank, a trusted adviser, a strategic investor, a partner, a facilitator, a catalyst and a convener, bringing groups to the table to start a dialogue or to launch a major project. The bulk of our most significant work is the product of collaboration – with local nonprofits, businesses, government and our philanthropic peers.

Our multiple roles go hand in hand with our grantmaking – which has increased exponentially since 1919 when we made our first grants, totaling slightly more than \$29,000. Thanks to the generations of donors who have partnered with us, today the Cleveland Foundation ranks among the largest community foundations in the world. Our assets exceed \$2 billion. Throughout our history, we have granted out approximately \$1.8 billion to nonprofit organizations. Last year, our grants totaled some \$89 million.

I want to spend some time on our grantmaking, in part because it's my own area of expertise. In my position as the foundation's executive vice president, I lead our grantmaking team. Also, the grants our board authorizes are tangible expressions of our priorities.

Let me illustrate, again reaching back to 1919. That was the year we produced the recreation survey I mentioned earlier. That survey was critical in galvanizing support for public funding, purchase and assembly of parkland. Today, the Cleveland Metroparks flourish in testament to the foundation's enduring commitment to improving public access to our region's natural assets.

Over the years, we have granted roughly \$2.2 million to the Metroparks for its nature centers, educational programming and reservations – including last year’s transfer of the parks that now form the Lakefront Reservation.

Scanning the record through the decades, you can find many other examples of robust grantmaking that attest to our priorities. It’s all neatly packaged on the special website we created for our centennial: [clevelandfoundation.org/100](http://clevelandfoundation.org/100). The site features an interactive timeline of the foundation’s activities and accomplishments and our community’s generosity over the past century. If you care about Cleveland history, you’ll find this site a valuable resource, with a compelling mix of videos, donor and leader biographies, searchable content and more.

On the site, you’ll see that we gave planning grants to jump-start Cuyahoga Community College. We championed the federation of Western Reserve University and Case Institute of Technology – as far back as 1924! – and patiently advocated our position for 43 years. After Case Western Reserve University was created in 1967, we awarded our first \$1 million grant in support.

We were in the forefront of the movement to rescue and revitalize Playhouse Square, and we were an early proponent of public funding for our arts and cultural institutions. We were there to support the historic mayoralty of Carl Stokes and to help Cleveland dig out from default 10 years later.

We pressed for the first public-private partnership of its kind in the nation, Invest in Children, to help our community’s youngest members thrive. We mobilized the community to link underserved urban teens with the positive experiences and adult role models they need to develop as responsible citizens. And we have funded initiatives in the field of aging for the better part of the last half-century.

We were a founding funder of the Free Medical Clinic of Greater Cleveland. We were the first noncoastal community foundation to rally our community against HIV and AIDS, back when patients were shunned and stigmatized. We spurred construction of the first market-rate housing in Hough, and we helped launch Cleveland Neighborhood Progress, a long-time partner in neighborhood restoration.

We convened the anchor institutions of University Circle to help rebuild the surrounding neighborhoods in the area known as Greater University Circle, and to improve the economic

opportunities of the people who live in these disinvested locations. Just this year, we were proud to be the presenting sponsor when the Gay Games came to Cleveland and Akron.

And always, always, we have advocated for top-quality public education for Cleveland's school children. From our landmark education survey of 1915 to our present-day partnership with the George Gund Foundation to establish 14 innovative schools and support the Cleveland Plan for Transforming Schools, we have invested time, energy and financial resources in a relentless drive to give our community's children the first-class education they deserve.

Now, I want to pivot from our first century to the history we are writing in this centennial year. To visibly mark our 100<sup>th</sup> year – and the birth of the entire field of community philanthropy – we decided to do what we do best: Give back to the community we love, in honor of our donors and the grantee organizations that have partnered with us for a stronger Cleveland.

On or close to the second day of each month – in keeping with the foundation's actual birthday, January 2 – I get up at an ungodly hour and drive to the studios of Fox 8, a centennial media partner of ours. There, I join its morning anchor team at some point between 6 and 6:45 to unveil our surprise birthday gift to the community.

Have any of you taken advantage of this free public access to some of our community's signature assets? In addition to spotlighting nonprofit partners we have helped build or enhance through the years, we wanted to expose Greater Clevelanders to these civic treasures they may never have explored:

The Regional Transit Authority; the Great Lakes Science Center and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame at North Coast Harbor; the Cleveland International Film Festival; Cleveland Metroparks Zoo; the museums at Wade Oval; Tri-C JazzFest; the Cleveland Orchestra at Blossom Music Center; Cinema on the Square at PlayhouseSquare; our lakefront and riverfront from the deck of the Goodtime III; and, this weekend, Holden Arboretum and Lake Metroparks Farmpark.

We've learned that if you give it, they will come. From January through October, we will have partnered with 18 organizations and welcomed more than 120,000 members of the public. At least eight of our partner organizations have racked up record attendance on our free gift days.

Most gratifying has been the number of first-time patrons. An estimated 75 percent of the crowd at the Blossom concert had never seen the Cleveland Orchestra, either at Blossom or at

Severance Hall. We are giving back to the community at a grassroots level, and we will do it three more times before the year is out.

In addition to these monthly gifts, we have made centennial legacy grants, which represent a different approach. These are significant grants – some of the largest we've ever made, over and above our regular grantmaking – to strengthen Cleveland for the next century.

We've announced two such grants within the past three months. Both are dedicated to creating a sense of place – again, reinforcing the foundation's commitment to improving access to our natural assets.

Our \$8 million gift to LAND Studio will help execute the Group Plan to revitalize Public Square, while our \$5 million grant to the Trust for Public Land will support the conversion of an abandoned railroad right-of-way into the Cleveland Foundation Centennial Trail through the Flats, which will open access to Lake Erie and connect our riverfront to our lakefront.

We envision these high-quality public spaces as much more than pretty scenery. They will advance economic development, promote healthy living, heighten awareness of our natural assets and bring Greater Clevelanders together. Moreover, these grants are catalyzing other funders to join in transforming our city.

Our centennial legacy Encore program has had a lower profile because we've started it not with one big grant, but with a series of smaller grants to local nonprofits that should ultimately total a collective \$10 million. We soft-launched this program at our 2013 annual meeting, where our keynote speaker was Jane Pauley, who has interviewed people around the country on their Encore careers. This national movement aims to mobilize the talents of Americans aged 50 and older for the betterment of their communities. The guru in this field is Marc Freedman, founder and CEO of Encore.org – and a one-time Cleveland Foundation staffer. Our Encore work builds upon our long-standing commitment in the field of aging.

Two years ago, we announced our first centennial legacy grant: \$10 million toward Case Western Reserve University's new medical education and research building. One of the cool aspects of this grant was that the funds came from five Cleveland families who left charitable gifts to the foundation in the 1960s and 1970s – all earmarked for medical research and education. Those families could never have imagined that their gifts would help build a 21<sup>st</sup>-century medical school for Cleveland. It's a textbook example of the enduring legacy of our donors.

Ronn Richard has often said that to be a great city, Cleveland needs a first-class national research university. Under Barbara Snyder's leadership, CWRU is moving toward that status. And now, we see CWRU and Cleveland Clinic partnering in the ownership and operation of this badly needed facility – a development emblematic of the spirit of collaboration among these two University Circle anchors and a third, University Hospitals. All three have been avid partners in the Greater University Circle Initiative, embracing a common vision much larger than their own respective interests.

Our centennial legacy grants are intentionally forward-looking. I will conclude with some insights on other areas we expect to be involved in as we embark on the first decade of our second century.

Last month, we convened the community for our inaugural Fred Talk: a new quarterly series that builds on the innovative thinking of our founder by inviting Greater Clevelanders to learn, engage and contribute in conversations with local and national thought leaders. I invite your participation in these idea incubators, which were inspired by our centennial but will continue after our centennial year ends.

The first Fred Talk, "E<sup>3</sup>: Education, Economic Development, Empowerment," addressed a new focus for the foundation: exploring strategies to connect Cleveland students with real-world work experiences that better prepare them to be part of tomorrow's labor force. In line with this priority, last month our board approved the first grants to ramp up career technical education in the Cleveland schools. The idea is to structure career-based learning pathways that will compel students to think much earlier about what they will do for the rest of their lives, whether they enter college or the working world after high school graduation.

We sent our program directors for education and economic development on a study tour to the Netherlands and Finland, two countries known for their vocational education. We also commissioned a Cleveland-centric demand-supply study, which clearly showed the gap between well-paying jobs in our region and people credentialed to fill them. We must begin closing this gap because we are failing our students and sabotaging our community's future.

We are also pursuing existing initiatives. In education, we will continue supporting the implementation of the Cleveland Plan. In economic development, more than a decade of investment and partnership has yielded progress regionally, but we are shifting more resources to the core city, where the poverty and unemployment rates are three times higher. We chose

this course after re-evaluating our economic development efforts, which we do periodically with all our initiatives. Only by being flexible and adapting to changing needs can we serve our community effectively.

Finally, we will keep on speaking out for populations that need that affirmation, be they poor families, rape survivors, victims of racial and sex discrimination, or the LGBT community. All of them have a social justice advocate in the Cleveland Foundation.

Later this month, more than 1,400 delegates to the Council on Foundations' fall conference for community foundations will flock to Cleveland, where it all began a century ago. We are eager to host them and to show off the city we call home.

Some of our peers are on the cusp of their own centennial years. I hope they will seize the opportunity to throw a party and invite the entire community, as we have done. As the giver, we've gained at least as much as the recipients.

I began with a baseball metaphor. I'll conclude with the observation that philanthropy is a team sport – and I hope you will sign on, if you haven't already. Come to a Fred Talk. Launch your own Encore career. If you're able to donate for the benefit of your fellow Clevelanders, talk with our Advancement team, which can help create a giving plan just for you. Work with the Cleveland Foundation in the public interest – your interest – because an engaged community is the best centennial legacy of all.

Thank you.