

THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

By Richard M. Smith

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The theme of this season in philanthropy seems to be, well, themes—grand themes, global themes, mega themes. Entrepreneurship. Climate Change. Global Health. The latest example surfaced late last year when Darren Walker, the President of the Ford Foundation, announced that henceforth all of Ford's grants would fit under the umbrella of fighting "Inequality." Who knows whether the trend will turn out to be good or bad. Some great programs may wither because they don't fit neatly into thematic boxes. On the other hand, I'm sure many worthy ones will receive important new support. What interests me is how unique The Pinkerton Foundation is in the world of philanthropy, and how our "where-the-rubber-meets-the-road" approach—and not a grand abstraction—shapes every decision we make about how best to serve the disadvantaged young people of New York City.

It's not that Pinkerton grantmaking doesn't have themes. We've unearthed a lot of them, and you'll read about some later in this report. It's how we arrive at them that differs from the philanthropic giants. Ours is very much a bottom-up approach. Because we focus entirely on the five boroughs, we see our grantees all the time. We get to know them in ways that a program officer parachuting in from afar simply can't. Most of all we have the luxury of learning from *them* about what works and what doesn't. Senior Program Officer Julie Peterson often talks about the value of "credible messengers" in youth programs—those leaders who can teach by example and experience because they have walked in the shoes of the participants. (In fact, it's one of the themes of this report.) Laurie Dien, our Vice President of Programs, sees the *programs* we support as credible messengers. "We get to know our grantees well," says Laurie. "We get to listen, not just tell. We get smarter as a result, and sometimes we can put the puzzle pieces together with what we've learned elsewhere to help the field get smarter. Our grantees appreciate our approach, but it also makes our jobs much more meaningful."

One other hallmark of the Pinkerton way is that our grants deliver tangible, immediate benefits. We have the board to thank for making that theme perfectly clear. Whatever we may learn about youth development, however we may contribute to long-term systemic change, we know that first and foremost Pinkerton funding will be delivering much-needed help to vulnerable or disadvantaged young people who are alive today. In 2015, we authorized a total of \$34.7 million in grants to 287 organizations, an overwhelming majority providing support for direct-service organizations or programs

that directly touch the young people of the city. In the process we have been happily surprised by our ability to both meet immediate needs and create program models that can work on a broader scale. Some of the year's highlights:

The Pinkerton Science Scholars: For the last three years we have been enthusiastic supporters of the Science Research Mentoring Program for talented but disadvantaged young people in the city. The program, based on a model developed by the American Museum of Natural History, had reached capacity when Pinkerton offered a planning grant to expand the program to other science-based institutions in the city. The goal was to replicate the core of the museum's model: offering young scholars a minimum of 70 hours of training on the scientific method and laboratory techniques, engaging in an authentic research project for at least 100 hours under the direct mentorship of a professional scientist and presenting those research findings to an audience of professionals and peers. Thanks to Pinkerton funding, the program has grown to include fifteen institutions ranging from Rockefeller University, the NYU School of Engineering and two institutes at Columbia University to several branches of the City University of New York and other science related organizations. By the end of 2015, more than 700 students had taken part in the mentoring experience.

In June, the Foundation announced a dramatically stepped up commitment to the program. On top of earlier grants of \$5.8 million, Pinkerton pledged \$10 million over the next five years to provide the life-changing mentoring experience to an additional 2,000 students. The program also took on a new identity: The Pinkerton Science Scholars Program. As part of the expanded commitment, the education team at the American Museum of Natural History will undertake college and career tracking for all program participants. Current partner institutions will continue to receive substantial resources, and new partner institutions will be added. By raising the scale and profile of the program, we hope the scholars will benefit even more in college admissions and financial aid. And by adding more detailed monitoring, we hope to spur the adoption of the Science Research Mentoring model in other cities. Indeed, Museum President Ellen Futter is enormously enthusiastic about the program and eager to help extend it to new regions.

At our December board meeting, the Foundation added two new sites to the Science Scholars Program: the STEM Academy at John Jay College and HYPOTHEkids, the nonprofit education arm of Harlem Biospace, a cooperative lab space for biotech startups established in partnership with the New York City Economic Development Corporation. The HYPOTHEkids program is unique in the mentoring consortium

because some of the mentors will come from the ranks of the entrepreneurs at the Harlem Biospace; the others will be faculty members from Columbia University's Department of Biomedical Engineering. In addition, we have made grants totaling \$206,000 to the Irondale Theater Company to work with 400 young scholars in the research mentoring program to develop their improvisation, presentation and public speaking skills. As one group leader explained: "No one is going to pay attention to your research presentation unless you show your own passion for your work." The initial workshop was a great success: by all accounts producing a gain in spontaneity and self-confidence among all the participants.

South Jamaica Reads/East New York Reads: The South Jamaica Reads Initiative grew out of our feeling that the small literacy programs in the city could do a much better job if they worked together. Now in its second year, South Jamaica Reads aligns ten nonprofit organizations in a poor and academically challenged neighborhood in Queens to help create a culture and a continuum of literacy. While it's far too soon to count grade-level gains, Program Officer Danielle Pulliam reports that the early indicators are remarkable: 14,000 books have been distributed to 3,000 families; volunteers have provided 1,000 hours of tutoring; branch library traffic is up; and 30 community events have been held to celebrate reading. Principals at the two target elementary schools report increased parent engagement and that children in the school-based programs are reading an average of 2.6 books a week. Even the South Jamaica business community has joined in: 30 local businesses are offering discounts to children and parents who show their South Jamaica Reads "passport." We have been particularly pleased to see that 580 parents have joined workshops to promote reading development. Among other things, that level of participation should help explode the myth that parents in poor communities don't care about their children's academic success.

In the belief that it's not too early to launch another test case, we decided to take the "Reads" concept to another community that has known little but academic failure: the Cypress Hills neighborhood of East New York, Brooklyn. With the support of the principals of two local elementary schools, we have—under the leadership of Literacy Inc. (LINC) — pulled together two providers focused on young parents (Reach Out and Read of Greater New York and Parent-Child Home Program), five in-school literacy organizations (LINC, Experience Corps, City Year, Reading Alliance and Reading Partners), two summer academic programs (Summer Advantage USA and Jumpstart for Young Children), two parent engagement programs (LINC and Learning Leaders) and the local Brooklyn branch libraries. As in South Jamaica, the goal is to develop a continuum of events, services, mentoring and tutoring for 8,100

children and their families. The Pinkerton contribution is \$1.5 million annually for each of the three years of the new program and includes a modest research budget to allow Algorhythm, an independent program evaluator, to monitor student outcomes in both South Jamaica and East New York.

When the Messenger is the Message: As noted above, Pinkerton believes credible messengers add value to a host of youth development programs. In the world of court-involved young people, mentors who come from the same communities and who have had contact with the criminal justice system have an especially powerful role to play. Their words carry real weight. They inspire trust because they have survived similar challenges and are now living the lives they advocate. Through their work with young people, the messengers—many of whom are still struggling with challenges of their own-- reap the benefits of service and experience a deepening of their own commitment to personal and professional growth. Those are big “wins” all around.

Several programs in the Youth Justice portfolio have credible messenger mentoring at their core. Two college programs— Future Now at Bronx Community College and the College Initiative at John Jay--rely on credible messenger mentors to support court-involved students as they navigate life in college. The Arches Alumni Academy for Advancement at Community Connections for Youth and the Arches and Next Steps programs at Bronx Clergy Coalition have had great success using credible mentoring to create a gravitational pull that keeps young people off the street. The Council for Unity uses group leaders who were formerly incarcerated to support pro-social “gangs” in prisons and, with Pinkerton’s support, is working with young people on Riker’s Island. The Bard Prison Initiative employs teachers who have earned their college degrees in prison to teach court-involved young people at community-based organizations to prepare for high-school equivalency exams and encourage college attendance. Credible messengers provide support and encouragement that enables young adults to develop the hope and motivation to reengage with education and meaningful employment, taking ownership of their futures. Taken together, the Foundation will provide \$878,000 in support of these mentoring programs in 2016.

Now in its fourth year, the Pinkerton Fellows Initiative at John Jay offers mentoring—and a message—of a slightly different variety. As we have reported in the past, we love the Fellows Initiative because it provides important financial assistance to some of John Jay’s most promising students and offers talented helping hands to nonprofits serving the youth justice field. In the past year, twelve Community Fellows spent a minimum of 1,085 hours each working with young people in a host of community-based

programs, teaching high school equivalency classes, leading life skills workshops and offering job training advice. John Jay students come from one of the most diverse student bodies in the City University of New York system, and the Pinkerton Fellows often become role models for the youth they serve. These juniors and seniors were joined last year by four Graduate Fellows in forensic psychology to provide more intensive counseling to at-risk youth. Pinkerton's investment so far: \$3.9 million.

The STEM Education Network: The first grant Program Officer Jenny Correa recommended after joining the Foundation in 2012 was a discretionary grant of \$25,000 to support the launch of the New York City STEM Education Network. The original goal of the network was to survey the landscape of after-school and summer STEM programming in the city. But, encouraged by Laurie Dien, Jenny had other ideas. She challenged the group to develop high-quality STEM initiatives that would enrich after-school programs for years to come. The result: two programs, the STEM Educators Academy, which pairs after-school educators and school-day teachers to work together to co-create a lively STEM curriculum, and Taking Root: Strengthening STEM, which uses experts in a "train the trainers" model to help fill the shortage of qualified science and technology teachers in the after-school field. The Pinkerton Board approved three-year grants of \$1.66 million and \$455,000, respectively, to try out both models.

We've come a long, long way since then. Taking Root is in the third year of training "Master Trainers" by experts from the Partnership for Afterschool Education. By the program's end in June 2017, PASE will have trained 51 Master Trainers at 24 community-based programs and created vastly-improved STEM activities for 3,000 young people in their after-school programs.

The news from the STEM Educators Academy is equally exciting—and another example of the from-the-bottom-up nature of Pinkerton philanthropy. The experiential curriculum is not only teaching young people science but sparking a passion for it. By next year, 90 adult participants in schools and community-based organizations will have worked collaboratively to deliver the curriculum to 2,200 students for three to six hours each week. The STEM Academy simply would not have happened without Pinkerton's \$230,000 pilot grant and the work that Jenny and Laurie did to pull the partnership together. In November, the lead partner, ExpandEd Schools (formerly known as The Afterschool Corporation), received a prestigious and highly competitive "Investing in Education" grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The grant—worth \$2.4 million—will support the Academy for an additional three years and include a full evaluation of the model.

Writing, Reading and Youth Development: Pinkerton has always seen writing as a valuable tool for self-expression and emotional development as well as a gateway skill to high wage jobs. Under Program Officer Erickson Blakney—like the boss, a former journalist—we have stepped up our support for writing programs serving middle and high school students. The results are promising. Foundation grantees such as ArtsConnection’s Teen Reviewers and Critics Programs, Girls Write Now, the NY Writers Coalition Urban Word, and Writopia Lab all report breakthroughs in confidence building, critical thinking and improved test scores as a result of creative and structured writing workshops.

One of our favorite programs is Youth Communication. Run by the dynamic Keith Hefner, a former MacArthur “genius” grant recipient, Youth Communication produces a compelling series of publications “by teens, for teens” about the challenges faced by young people in foster care, the justice system and other vulnerable situations. Thanks in part to Pinkerton’s encouragement, Youth Communication has developed a plan to extend its story-based curriculum to a much wider audience. In December, we approved a three year grant of \$480,000 to fund staff development, lesson plans, training modules and online projects, as well as continuing direct work with youth in foster care. We are especially pleased that the Pinkerton grant will match a challenge from the Dallas-based Jenesis Group, a private foundation that shares our enthusiasm for extending the powerful Youth Communication stories to teens around the country.

Living and Learning: There’s a temptation in reports like this to make it seem as if every program was an instant success, every grant transformative, with never a doubt or misstep along the way. Life and philanthropy don’t work that way. Candor requires us to report that several of the institutions at the core of the science research scholars program struggled initially to recruit enough scientist/mentors. The school principals in Brooklyn, whose enthusiasm is so essential to our coordinated early literacy programs, displayed significant skepticism at the outset, and one of the direct-service programs failed to deliver and had to be replaced. And while we are delighted by the overall success of our STEM after-school initiatives, it’s fair to say that some of the individual programs are doing better than others.

I’ve learned that each shortcoming is a painful wound for our program officers, but I’m not at all surprised that some grants miss the mark. In fact, I remind the staff that if every grant is a great success, we probably aren’t thinking boldly enough. The good news is that our proximity

to the programs we support means that we are often able to recognize mistakes early, learn from them and readjust or, sadly, cut our losses when necessary.

True to Our Roots: With each passing year, the scale and the complexity of our grants seem to grow exponentially. I'm happy to report, however, that we haven't forgotten those small, often quirky organizations that for so many years formed the core of Pinkerton's philanthropy. In December alone, we approved 27 new grants of \$50,000 or less to small organizations. Four brief examples: Atlas, founded in 2012 by a young immigration lawyer and three of her former clients to provide legal counsel, mentoring, and college access programming for immigrant youth; Latinas On the Verge of Excellence (inevitably, "LOVE") started by a Latina graduate student at NYU who was shocked by the rates of suicide, teen pregnancy and high school dropouts among her younger peers; 826NYC, where a team led by a former editor at Writers and Poets magazine works behind a "secret" door in a flashy costume and comic book store to offer homework help and teach creative writing; and Rockaway Youth Task Force, a youth-founded and youth-led organization that empowers teens to engage in civic affairs and community service.

While these and other small grantees have tiny budgets and short track records, they share attributes that have always appealed to Pinkerton: passionate founders, innovative thinking, and engaged board members. Not all will succeed or move to scale, but they will all do good work. And some may grow into the next decade's versions of the Friends of the Children NYC, Harlem RBI, Hour Children, Futures and Options, Street Squash or Getting Out and Staying Out—all of which (and many others) used early Pinkerton grants to grow into strong and stable forces in the lives of the city's young people. We'll certainly be cheering the newcomers on.