

Evanston Now

Connections count, retiring foundation head says

By Bill Smith on April 16, 2015 - 11:50am

"The connections we can make and leverage are more important than the individual component parts of our work," retiring Evanston Community Foundation head Sara Schastok told guests at the foundation's annual meeting Wednesday evening.



Sara Schastok with new ECF Board Chair Mike Brody. (Photo by Jill Brazel.)

Discussing the foundation's Communityworks program, Schastok said the multi-year collaboration with the Grand Victoria Foundation resulted in a new \$6.8 million dollar fund dedicated to early childhood education and workforce development.

Schastok, who has seen the foundation's assets grow from \$3 million to \$20 million during her 14 years there, said, "Our story is also part of powerful changes in Evanston as represented by the cross-sector, public-private, tax-supported-community-based coalition of Cradle to Career."

Thanks to the new Communityworks fund, ECF was able to make new grants for workforce development, launch the innovative Evanston Two Generation Initiative, a career development program for parents based on research by the Foundation's partners at Northwestern University, and substantially increase early childhood education grants

since 2007.

"Kindergarten to workforce readiness is becoming the means to improving the economic security of families and to protecting what we value so highly -- being an inclusive and just community. This is the most important way in which our past connects to our future," she added.

About 75 board members, donors, business partners and committee members attended the event in the Crystal Ballroom at The Merion.

"In the face of widening wealth and educational gaps between haves and have-nots and growing evidence of the threats these gaps pose to core American values and experiences." Schastok said, "it is hard to argue against ECF doing what it can to address the challenges to those raising children on low incomes."