

## EMBEDDED PHILANTHROPY PROFILE

From “Moving Forward While Staying in Place: Embedded Funders and Community Change”  
(Chapin Hall Discussion Paper, 2004)

### ZEIST FOUNDATION

3715 Northside Parkway, 3-195, Atlanta, GA 30327, (404) 949-3162

#### SUMMARY

The Zeist Foundation laid the cornerstone for the Whitefoord Community Program in 1993 when it bought and renovated property adjacent to the Whitefoord Elementary School in southeast Atlanta and opened a school-based health clinic. Over the years, the Whitefoord Community Program has provided community-building activities in this 1-square-mile neighborhood of about 6,000 people. These activities advance its goal of ensuring that “every child in the Whitefoord community is equipped with everything he or she needs to succeed in school.” The Foundation has played a key role in the program’s evolution, and it currently provides \$600,000 to \$800,000 annually towards its \$3 million budget. Although the Foundation originally anticipated a 10 year tenure in the neighborhood, its commitment is likely to continue for another decade.

#### HOW AND WHY DID THE FOUNDATION EMBED ITSELF IN THIS PARTICULAR NEIGHBORHOOD?

Dr. George Brumley, chair of the pediatrics department at Emory and interim Dean of the medical school, had developed an interest in school-based health clinics as a method of connecting public health, public education, and family well-being. Nearing retirement in the early 1990s, he and his wife were also looking for a vehicle that could serve as a training ground for their five children in philanthropy, all of whom had advanced degrees in areas that would benefit a community-change enterprise. Having obtained some resources to design and operate a school-based clinic, Brumley chose the Whitefoord Elementary School as the new clinic’s home for several reasons: the school had been recently renovated and had a receptive principal; the low-income community surrounding the school had many needs and few services; and the neighborhood was conveniently located in relation to his former work. He recruited a former student, Dr. Veda Johnson, to run the clinic. After a property across the street from the school was purchased and renovated and the clinic was opened, it became clear that many of the families had problems that went beyond medical issues. This understanding led Brumley and colleagues, through the Zeist Foundation, to develop the Whitefoord Community Program. The Foundation did not start with a grand plan or comprehensive model. Rather, it had a broad vision about the critical role of a child’s early life experiences in determining his or her later life chances; the comprehensive approach grew from the work over time.

## EMBEDDED PHILANTHROPY PROFILE

From “Moving Forward While Staying in Place: Embedded Funders and Community Change”  
(Chapin Hall Discussion Paper, 2004)

### **WHAT BELIEFS AND THEORIES OF CHANGE INFORM THE FOUNDATION’S WORK?**

Dr. Brumley was a scientist who preferred a research-based approach to program planning and development. The importance of early childhood development led him to focus on early intervention. He read a lot, consulted with others, and looked at different approaches. He had been impressed by the strategic value of “bounding” an area for intensive targeting because it focused efforts on a “doable” task. Although the theory that guided him was sometimes more intuitive than articulated, at its core were a number of assumptions about goals and strategies: a low-income neighborhood could develop the capacity to access help and negotiate with public-service providers, financial institutions, housing developers, and others; asking people what they want and carefully listening to them are critical to successful community development; and local leadership is important in generating community ownership. Brumley was also guided by a set of values and religious beliefs that centered on respect and appreciation for the strengths of the community. He believed strongly that the Foundation should never exploit the community for its own ends (e.g., publicity or credit for the Foundation) or for leveraging funds (especially through photographs and giving requests that used the community’s problems to generate sympathy).

### **WHAT STRATEGIES HAS THE FOUNDATION USED?**

The Zeist Foundation characterizes its strategy as developmental and organic, starting with children’s health and broadening to other educational, psychosocial, family, and community issues as they affect child well-being. Having started in 1994 with a school-based health clinic, the Whitefoord Community Program evolved over time to include a dental clinic, a family resource center (early intervention and supportive services), a family learning center (family literacy and computer training), a child development program for seventy-five children birth to age 4, the Intel computer clubhouse (an after-school program), and other community programs of interest to residents. To implement the programs, the Zeist Foundation purchased and renovated several properties surrounding the Whitefoord Elementary School and established a range of partnerships with organizations such as Save the Children, Families First, and the Intel Corporation.

More recently, the Foundation identified the lack of safe and affordable housing as a significant barrier to child and family health and, in response, is implementing an affordable housing strategy. Because housing was an area of expertise for the executive director, she consulted with her colleagues at the Zeist Companies, and they ultimately decided to establish a limited liability corporation and give it \$2 million to purchase the land and two housing complexes (more than

## EMBEDDED PHILANTHROPY PROFILE

From “Moving Forward While Staying in Place: Embedded Funders and Community Change”  
(Chapin Hall Discussion Paper, 2004)

100 units) that were the source of many of the neighborhood’s worst problems. Forty percent of the children served by Whitefoord live in this area. The aim of this project is to tear these structures down and rebuild affordable housing without causing significant displacement. Zeist hopes to contract with the premier community development corporation in Atlanta to work on the project. In addition, the Foundation has hired a full-time consultant to be a watchdog for the project and ensure that it is well implemented.

Central to the Foundation’s strategy has been a community advisory board made up of a diverse group of residents—home owners, renters, school personnel, PTA, churches, and so forth. Its role is to be the ears and the eyes of the program and to provide guidance on programming and other issues. The advisory board participated in a leadership training program at the Fanning Institute, which focused on board development.

### **WHAT INTERNAL PRACTICES, STRUCTURES, AND POLICIES HAS THE FOUNDATION DEVELOPED TO SUPPORT THE WORK?**

For the first decade of the Whitefoord Community Program, George Brumley and his son-in-law, Richard Morrell, played important leadership roles in program development and implementation. There was no executive director until 2000; as such, this team, and to a lesser extent other family members, assumed a range of executive tasks at Whitefoord. The Foundation could be a flexible funder and respond as needed to emerging needs and opportunities. Although Brumley believed it was useful to set short- and long-term goals, his more fundamental orientation was that “there’s a job to be done, so let’s go and do it.” Few internal policies or structures constrained decision making on where and how to spend the Foundation’s resources. George was both the president of the Foundation and president of the Whitefoord Community Program. When the Foundation needed technical expertise, it hired consultants, keeping the Foundation lean and flexible. Further, easy access to the Zeist Companies meant that the Foundation could draw on a range of skills and resources for various real estate and financial dealings.

Established in 1989, the Zeist Foundation’s board was structured to include Brumley and his wife, their five children, and their four spouses. Tragically, both parents, three of their children and spouses, and four of their grandchildren were killed in an airplane accident in the summer of 2003. Remaining family members are now contemplating the future direction of the Foundation and its work.

## EMBEDDED PHILANTHROPY PROFILE

From “Moving Forward While Staying in Place: Embedded Funders and Community Change”  
(Chapin Hall Discussion Paper, 2004)

### WHAT CHANGES IN THE COMMUNITY DOES THE FOUNDATION POINT TO AS SIGNIFICANT?

Most of the accomplishments reported by those involved with Whitefoord are anecdotal and involve the many families and several thousand children who have benefited from the high-quality services and programs offered by the Whitefoord Community Program. The exception involves a well-publicized article that Dr. Johnson published in *Pediatrics* (2000) that was based on data she collected indicating that a substantial amount of Medicaid funding was saved by providing health care through the school-based clinics. The residents who are employees (about half of Whitefoord staff) have attained quality jobs and training opportunities. Staff report a greater sense of opportunity among some residents and an emerging sense that change is possible. Success tends to attract success, and groups now come to Whitefoord interested in establishing partnerships in the neighborhood. For example, Intel approached the Foundation a couple of years ago about starting a model Intel Club House in the neighborhood. Zeist bought a building and renovated it for this purpose, and Intel pays for program operations.

### WHAT WERE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES? HOW DID THE FOUNDATION CONFRONT THEM?

**Building trust.** The neighborhood was just emerging from what they believed were “failed promises” of earlier community-change initiatives. Residents wondered why a White doctor was buying land in their community, and it took considerable time to reassure individuals about Brumley’s motives. He and the other staff never assumed they knew what residents wanted; instead, they “humbled” themselves and eventually garnered the trust of the community.

**Evaluation.** Although Dr. Brumley always wanted to demonstrate the impact of the strategy—in part so that it could be replicated—the high turnover in the neighborhood (estimated to be 43 percent in the elementary school when they started, 30 percent currently) makes this research task challenging. In 2002-2003, the Whitefoord Community Program received funds from the Blank Foundation to hire staff charged with designing and conducting a program-wide evaluation.

**Staying focused.** At times, Whitefoord staff report spreading themselves too thin both in terms of time and energy and in terms of resources. It was hard not to pursue everything at once, trying to be all things to all people, when they heard exciting new ideas and knew the community could use any help it could get. Sometimes, however, this all-encompassing approach led to partnerships and programs that were difficult to manage or were ultimately unsustainable. The



## EMBEDDED PHILANTHROPY PROFILE

From “Moving Forward While Staying in Place: Embedded Funders and Community Change”  
(Chapin Hall Discussion Paper, 2004)

Foundation is moving into housing and would like to spur economic development (including IDAs) in the future but expects to be very thoughtful about parsing the agenda into manageable pieces.

**Managing growth and sustainability.** The Whitefoord Community Program’s fairly rapid growth generated various management challenges, including the constant pressure to identify new sources of funding to sustain existing programs and start new ones. The absence of an executive director for about a year compounded these challenges, but they are high on the new executive director’s agenda.

### INTERVIEWEES

**Lizanne Stephenson**, Former Executive Director, Zeist Foundation

**John Stephenson**, Executive Director, J. Bulow Campbell Foundation

**Nancy Brumley**, board member, Zeist Foundation

**Marie Foster**, board member, Zeist Foundation

**Yvette Hagins**, Chief Executive Officer, Whitefoord Community Program

**Veda Johnson**, Director Community and School-Based Health Clinics and Assistant  
Professor at Emory School of Medicine

**Audrey Smith**, member of the Community Advisory Board

**Gayle Gellerstedt**, Director of the Child Development Program

