

GIVING

Gifts, Grants, and Good Works

Small Grant Maker, Closing Down in 4 Years, Is a Force in Immigration

By Ben Gose

IT'S FITTING that Darren Sandow heads a foundation built on the Miracle-Gro fortune.

Fans of Mr. Sandow's work say he has nurtured impressive results out of the Hagedorn Foundation, which was founded eight years ago with just \$58-million. Mr. Sandow's local and national leadership on immigration issues has greatly benefited Nassau and Suffolk Counties, the two Long Island counties at the center of the foundation's work, they say.

Last month, Mr. Sandow received the Robert W. Scrivner Award for Creative Grantmaking, which comes with a \$10,000 prize, at the Council on Foundations' annual meeting in Chicago.

While little-known and destined to be short-lived—Hagedorn is now down to \$31-million and plans to close its doors in 2017—the foundation “isn't afraid to play outside of its weight class,” says Monona Yin, a consultant to the Four Freedoms Fund, a group of foundations that give to immigrants-rights groups.

“Darren is a model for what a good regional funder can and should do,” she says.

'Plugged In'

Mr. Sandow has turned Hagedorn into a major player in defusing the bitter immigration tensions that have plagued Long Island since Latino immigrants began flocking to the suburban area for work in the late 1990s.

The foundation jumped into the fray locally by founding two nonprofits—one that seeks to improve perceptions about immigrants and another that seeks to engage voters and community leaders in immigrant-rights issues.

But Mr. Sandow has also taken a prominent role nationally, joining foundation collaboratives like the Four Freedoms Fund. Last month, Mr. Sandow traveled to Washington for a White House briefing for philanthropists on the immigration-reform debate.

“We've plugged in at the national level because we know that until we get comprehensive immigration reform, things aren't going to get a lot better locally,” he says.

Creating a Foundation

Mr. Sandow met Horace and Amy Hagedorn at the Long Island Community Foundation, a branch of the New York Community Trust. Mr. Sandow became a program officer at the community foundation in 1996, after serving in the Peace Corps in Costa Rica and holding jobs at several nonprofits.

Horace Hagedorn, a former advertising executive who co-founded Miracle-Gro, the ubiquitous plant food, had opened a donor-advised fund at the community foundation in 1995 after selling Miracle-Gro to another company.

For most of his life, Mr. Hagedorn was a “checkbook philanthropist” who responded primarily to appeals from large and well-known charities, like the



RON AIRA, FOR THE CHRONICLE

How a Regional Foundation Gets So Much Done

MAKE NATIONAL CONNECTIONS

By getting involved in national immigration organizations, Darren Sandow, Hagedorn's executive director, learned about strategies he could try at home, and also steered the attention of much bigger national foundations toward Long Island.

EMPOWER THE PEOPLE YOU'RE TRYING TO HELP

Rather than spending on direct assistance to the immigrants, Hagedorn gives more than \$400,000 per year to a civic-engagement group that is focused on getting the newcomers to vote and take leadership positions in their communities.

DON'T BE AFRAID TO GO IT ALONE

When Hagedorn could not rally other foundations to help it challenge a Nassau County decision about a youth board, Mr. Sandow requested a meeting with county officials anyway, and he won even greater results than he had expected.

CONSIDER CLOSING AT A SET TIME

Hagedorn will spend all its assets by 2017, which enables it to grant far more each year than similar-size foundations that aim to operate in perpetuity.

Red Cross and local nonprofit hospitals, says Amy, his second wife.

But after joining the board of the Long Island Community Foundation, the couple began to learn about smaller local groups that were doing cutting-edge work.

When Mr. Hagedorn became frail, Amy Hagedorn asked the community fund for help with grant making—and Mr. Sandow was put on the case.

“Horace was not an easy person to collaborate with,” Ms. Hagedorn says. “Darren met that challenge early on. It won him Horace's trust—and mine.”

Mr. Hagedorn died in 2005 and left \$58-million to philanthropy.

Amy Hagedorn, who is in her 70s, used those funds to establish the Hagedorn Foundation, with Mr. Sandow as its executive director. She decided to spend all the assets by 2021, in the hope that she would live to see all the money distributed. (The date has since been moved to 2017 because the recession clobbered Hagedorn's assets.)

Focus on Immigration

Ms. Hagedorn was a pre-kindergarten teacher before meeting Horace, so a program focused on families, children, and youths was among the first choices for the Hagedorn Foundation.

The foundation's other main program

Amy Hagedorn and Darren Sandow plan to close the foundation's doors in 2017, allowing it to give more away than similar-size groups can.

area was simply too big to ignore: Long Island had become a national focal point for suburban strife over immigration.

As Latino immigrants moved to the counties for jobs, some longtime residents began to take a negative view of the newcomers.

Immigration advocates say the negative atmosphere was fed by some local political leaders, including Steve Levy, then Suffolk County executive and a co-founder of Mayors and Executives for Immigration Reform, a national group that wants to tighten the rules on immigrants in the United States. In 2007, Hagedorn made a \$230,000 grant to set

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NOTABLE GIFTS

Businessman Gives \$110-Million for Student Housing and Fellowships

How much: \$110-million

Who got it: University of Michigan

Who gave it: Charles Munger, vice chair of Berkshire Hathaway, an investment firm

Where the money will go: \$10-million will go to graduate fellowships and the rest to a residential facility for graduate students from a wide array of academic disciplines.

Donor's connection to the institution:

Mr. Munger, 89, studied mathematics at the university in the 1940s, before military service interrupted his studies. He later earned a law degree at Harvard.

Donor's previous giving: He provided \$3-million in 2007 for infrastructure improvements to a pair of the university's law school buildings, and \$20-million for renovations to its Lawyers Club housing complex, which was renamed for him.

How the donor chose his cause: Mr. Munger says he wanted a way to break down the isolation graduate students experience, and what he calls the "Balkanization of academia into little departments, which results in a lot of blindness." It's unusual for donors and administrators to focus on dormitories, Mr. Munger says, but it shouldn't be. "If you're an elite place and you've got 10 applicants for every spot, it's perfectly natural to think, Why in the hell do we have to do anything more for the students? They're begging to get in," he says. "That's a huge mistake. I don't think you abuse your best customers."



LIN JONES/UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Charles Munger was an undergraduate at the University of Michigan before World War II interrupted his studies.

—HEATHER JOSLYN

Tsinghua U. Gets \$100-Million and Help Raising More for Fellowship Program



A. SCOTT/PATRICKMCMULLAN.COM/SIPA PRESS

Stephen Schwarzman says he used the Rhodes Scholar program as a model for his new fellowship.

Impact of the gift: The fellowships will act as an endorsement of international education and international philanthropy, says Mr. Schwarzman.

How much: \$100-million

Who got it: Tsinghua University, in Beijing

Who gave it: Stephen Schwarzman, co-founder of the Blackstone Group, an investment firm

Where the money will go: Mr. Schwarzman's pledge will endow the Schwarzman Scholars program to provide tuition aid to graduate students from all over the world to study at the university's School of Economics and Management.

Donor's connection to the institution: Mr. Schwarzman is a member of the advisory board of the economics school.

Where other money for the program will come from: Mr. Schwarzman is helping Tsinghua raise an additional \$200-million for the program, and says he has already raised half of that.

Why the donor gave: Mr. Schwarzman says he was worried that economic frustrations in the West and elsewhere could turn into resentment over China's robust economic strides. "I wanted to do something that could try to ameliorate and address this problem."

—MARIA DI MENTO

Grant Maker Works to Get Immigrants to Be Activists

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up Long Island Wins, a communications campaign designed to highlight the positive contributions that immigrants were making in the community.

"This was Darren's brainchild," says Maryann Sinclair Slutsky, the group's executive director. "He realized that what was happening in Suffolk was really untenable. People were being terrorized."

Long Island Wins has since evolved into a full-fledged nonprofit, and Hagedorn has contributed a total of more than \$2-million to support it.

In 2008, when an Ecuadorian immigrant in Suffolk County was beaten to death by a group of white students out "beaner hopping"—a derogatory euphemism for attacking Hispanics—Long Island Wins had a blogger at the trial each day.

"That was a turning point," Ms. Slutsky says. "It made a huge impact in turning the tide."

Going National

Mr. Sandow's local involvement convinced him he needed to join the national debate.

He helped lead the Funders Census Initiative, an informal group that worked to ensure that hard-to-count communities, including immigrants, weren't overlooked in the 2010 census count.

He learned about Welcoming America, a program that builds connections between immigrants and long-term residents, and brought the program to Long Island, under the umbrella of Long Island Wins.

Until then, Welcoming America had been active only in Tennessee, but Mr. Sandow's support contributed to the charity's growth. Welcoming America is now active in 21 states.

"Darren's endorsement of the program helped persuade national grant makers to invest in expanding it," says Taryn Higashi, executive director of Unbound Philanthropy, an international foundation focused on immigration issues.

Fighting Back

Through his involvement in the Four Freedoms Fund, Mr. Sandow began to see the importance of getting immigrants more engaged in advocacy.

In 2010, Hagedorn created the Long Island Civic Engagement Table, bringing together local advocacy groups. Hagedorn provides most of the group's operating budget, with a grant of more than \$400,000 per year.

"We said, let's take the offense on this issue, and begin to fight back," Mr. Sandow says.

The civic-engagement table helped focus attention on the school board in Brentwood,

Long Island, which had faced allegations of racism. Ninety percent of the school district's students are black or Latino, but those minorities had never made up a majority of the school board. The civic group held a candidates' forum and encouraged local residents to vote. In 2012, voters elected new members to the board, putting black and Latino representatives in the majority for the first time.

The civic-engagement table also pushes to get issues that matter to immigrants on the radar of local politicians.

Late last year, the new Suffolk County executive, who replaced Mr. Levy, signed an executive order guaranteeing translation and interpretation services to all residents with limited English skills in their interactions with county government.

'Dogged Determination'

Immigration isn't the only issue on which Mr. Sandow has been willing to agitate.

When Nassau County tried to fold its youth board into a broader county department, Mr. Sandow tried to rally a group of local grant makers to protest. But only two of 15 foundations he approached were willing to sign a petition he circulated asking for a meeting with the county.

Hagedorn pushed on, largely alone, and won the respect of county executives when the foundation offered to pay for half the salary of a youth-board staff member.

His discussions with Nassau County officials led to the creation of a committee focused on improving the contracting and claims reimbursement process for nonprofits.

Mr. Sandow "leaves no stone unturned when it comes to problem-solving," says Gregory May, the county's legislative-affairs director. "He's the taskmaster of that meeting. He sets the agenda, and he follows up to make sure people are doing the work they said they'd do."

Ms. Hagedorn says she's proud of what the Hagedorn Foundation has accomplished.

"What I admire most in Darren is his dogged determination to do good," she says. "He's not easily discouraged. If one thing doesn't work, he tries another."

Hagedorn is now working to make sure its grantees, including the organizations it started, begin to diversify their sources of support before the foundation closes in 2017.

As for Mr. Sandow, he plans to move with his family to New Mexico at that time, rest for a few months, and figure out his next act.

"I love not knowing," he says, "and the challenge that lies ahead."

For details about other new gifts, including a \$66-million bequest to the Medical College of Georgia Foundation, go to philanthropy.com/topdonors.

Send gift news to gifts@philanthropy.com.