

## **The Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation Congratulates Mary Hunt for 22 Years of Service**

The Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation announces the planned retirement of its program director for community and economic development, Mary Hunt. A native of Clarksburg, West Virginia, Ms. Hunt joined the Foundation on December 1, 1999.

Lloyd Jackson, Chair of the Foundation's Board of Trustees commended Mary's work saying, "Mary has been a valued member of the Benedum Foundation family for over 20 years. She always was the consummate professional and the value she has added to the organizations, communities, and especially the people she worked with over those years is immeasurable. We will miss Mary, but she leaves the Foundation with a rich legacy, the value of which few people ever create, and for which she forever can be proud."

Mary came to Benedum with experience in both government, at the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection, and the private sector, at Toyota, where she held management roles with responsibilities in finance, human resources, and general administration. During her time at Benedum, Mary championed community-led strategies and brought new thinking to the Foundation about how to shape greater impact. "Mary is completely devoted to community development," said Benedum President Jen Giovannitti, "and that is why she has successfully forged strategies within Benedum to leverage big federal grants, support housing and entrepreneurship, nurture new sources of investment capital, scale the work of critical capacity building intermediary organizations, and invest in downtown redevelopment."

In addition to her deep love of West Virginia, Mary has a spirit of optimism. She maintains a passion for Michael Benedum's viewpoint that "we know not where a seed may sprout." Brandon Dennison of Coalfields Development Corporation has worked with Mary for years and said, "Mary Hunt believed in Coalfield Development as an innovative organization, and in me as a young leader, very early on in our formation. Without a doubt, I'm one of several hundred young leaders in this state whose lives were changed by Mary. Sometimes, innovation gets messy. It takes grit to stick with the vision. And it takes persistent problem solving to overcome barriers. Her ability to make good work happen is unrivaled."

In the last decade, Benedum has helped leverage more federal dollars into West Virginia by embracing agencies like the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) as trusted colleagues. Mary set out to build capacity and help communities apply for the larger, more ambitious POWER grants from the ARC. In fact, Mary realized early on that philanthropy alone would never be the answer, so she built partnerships and invited others to add resources. In 2010, under Mary's leadership, Benedum was part of a small group of foundations with the ARC that envisioned a funders network for central Appalachia, and after over a decade of continual funding, the Appalachia Funders

Network has grown to a level of both independence and national recognition as a leader of innovative work.

Stephanie Tyree Executive Director of West Virginia Community Development Hub (The Hub) and Kent Spellman, founding Executive Director of The Hub both worked with Mary for years. Kent Spellman said, “It was Mary who pushed for the development of a Community Development Model that would bring better returns, and Mary who was more responsible than any other individual for the creation of the West Virginia Community Development Hub to implement that model.” Stephanie Tyree explained, “Mary is a sounding board and a thought partner; a dreamer and maker of the future who shows up each day with unreasonable optimism, which helped make all of us who worked with her more optimistic about the change we could make. Her energy and positivity rubbed off on all of us.”

Mary Hunt played such a pivotal role in helping communities help themselves that in 2019 she was recognized by West Virginia Living Magazine as West Virginian of the Year. Her work models how philanthropy can invest in growing rural intermediaries and create the right environment for true systems change. Congratulations to Mary Hunt on an impactful career!

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The Benedum Foundation looks forward to interviewing senior level candidates who will become the next critical leader to oversee its community and economic development grantmaking in West Virginia.

You can find the full job description [here](#). Potential candidates, please direct inquiries to [careers@benedum.org](mailto:careers@benedum.org).

**To learn more about the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation, our history and our grantmaking, please visit our website at <https://benedum.org>**