Background

Giving Voice • Strengthening Policy • Improving Health

The best policy is made when the most voices are heard – stories from the field, from divergent experience, and from experts on the ground serving Kansans. Empathy and sympathy are built when people understand the plights and situations of others. But it all depends on the ability to communicate, to advocate, to reach people and to tell stories with humility, to build compassion, to reach the unknowing. It also depends on the ability to see the whole picture, to know when to speak out, form coalitions, send out an alarm, draw a line in the sand, and when to disagree respectfully and wait until tomorrow. The Sunflower Foundation believes that the voices of Kansas health nonprofits must be heard in order to create the best health policy for all Kansans.

The ability to articulate need – to civic clubs, neighbors, the media, the state legislature, and to Congress – is necessary to build compassion. Compassion is built only when there is trust in the messenger.

Only 40 percent of Kansas health nonprofits believe their mission calls for participation in public policy, and of these, only one-third spend more than a few hours a week as advocates to the state legislature during its session. (Sunflower Foundation Survey on Advocacy by Health Related Nonprofits, David Arons, 2008)

The Sunflower Foundation strongly believes that increasing this participation will make a difference in the health and well-being of Kansans.

Purpose

Teach Nonprofit Health Leaders to Become World-Class Advocates

What is an advocate? Quite simply, an advocate is someone who stands up for a group of people, providing accurate and articulate support for their cause. Effective advocates possess strong communication, negotiation, motivational and organizational skills and know how to use tactics and strategies to advance their causes and better the lives of those they serve.

To encourage our state’s nonprofit health leaders to become effective advocates, the Sunflower Foundation has created a unique training program unlike any other in the nation: The Sunflower Foundation Advocacy Fellowship.
The Sunflower Foundation spent over a year talking to experts and deliberating, seeking to determine the skills necessary to train Kansas nonprofits’ standouts to be effective advocates. And this is what they found:

- An advocate needs to know more than the process, though an understanding of process is vital;
- An outstanding advocate, an effective advocate, understands relationship building, media relations, speech giving, grassroots building, community energizing, coalition building, and of course, policy making.

So the Sunflower Foundation created the most comprehensive advocacy training program in Kansas, if not in the nation, believing that the investment will result in improving the health and well-being for those that cannot speak for themselves, and in some way, for all Kansans.

The Advocacy Fellowship will help leaders in health-related nonprofit organizations develop the understanding, experience and expertise they need to become powerful voices for the Kansans they serve. The goal of the Fellowship is to increase participation in the public policy process on the local, state and national levels, thereby strengthening the voice of nonprofit organizations and those they serve, resulting in the formation of sound health policies.

**Program**

The Sunflower Foundation has designed a program that is tough, thorough, but time efficient. Fellows meet every other month for a year. The sessions are general 2½ days long and include:

**Session 1: Give Voice to Your Mission**
Advocacy is more than believing in a great cause. It is developing effective strategies that work on the local, state and national level to bring about action that benefits your organization. Fellows will hear from a nationally-renowned expert in the advocacy field, meet each other and learn about the Fellowship.

**Session 2: Grassroots Organizing and Coalition Building**
Fellows will learn to empower their members, clients and friends to build a grassroots team, organize this team, and effectively and efficiently use it. A meaningful grassroots team is the tool that turns a single voice into a movement. In addition, Fellows will spend time in a professionally-facilitated academic discussion of health, advocacy and the role of government in our society.

**Session 3: Navigating the Kansas Capitol and the Legislative Policy Process**
First-rate advocates do not just know, but completely understand the complex, multi-layered lawmaking process. Fellows will visit the Capitol, talk with key government officials in the
legislature and administration, and participate in a legislative simulation created to foster this understanding.

**Session 4: Master the Media**
In today’s media-minded world, it is essential that advocates master the art of developing an effective media message and perfect their ability to work with members of the media. This training will feature small group media training with a professional media and presentation trainer, with the belief that practice makes perfect. Fellows will also be introduced to local media.

**Session 5: Navigating Capitol Hill**
Fellows will travel to Washington to learn from Kansas legislators and their staff members, federal government officials, health policy veterans, pollsters and advocacy experts.

**Session 6: Putting It All Together**
Armed with new skills, new perspectives and new resources, Fellows will use this session to tie it together and take it home.

**Commitment**
Fellows make a commitment to attend all sessions and other activities related to the year-long Fellowship…and to learn, to practice, to be models within their organizations and their causes, to provide honest feedback and to a willingness to be a part of a network of advocates.

The Sunflower Foundation’s commitment is to facilitate and coordinate all aspects of the Fellowship, including faculty, curriculum and logistics—and also to create a durable network. Selected Fellowship faculty will be available to the Fellows as ongoing resources for a time following the Fellowship. Occasional events will be held with Fellows of each class and all classes, with the belief that the relationships formed and the resources Fellows can be for each other are important aspects of the Fellowship.

**Advisors and Selected Faculty**

*2008-2009 Fellowship*

**Steve Allen** has provided communications consulting for more than 18 years, including coaching spokespersons representing more than 90 ballot campaigns in 13 states. He has counseled U.S. presidential and gubernatorial candidates, university leaders, coaches and professors,
professional athletes, Fortune 500 company executives, and nonprofit organizations in preparation for television/radio interviews, debates, editorial board briefings and speeches.

**Vera Bothner** is a managing partner of Bothner and Bradley, Inc., a Wichita-based strategic communications company, where she specializes in designing communications strategies. She was head of Kansas’ largest advertising and public relations firm, a consultant to the Kansas Health Institute, and has spent much of her career working with organizations on branding, issues management, community relations, and crisis response.

**Tami Bradley** is also a managing partner of Bothner and Bradley, Inc., a Wichita-based strategic communications company, where she specializes in identifying target audiences and organizational communications. As an executive for the Kansas Health Foundation, she directed social marketing projects related to children’s health and public health, including Emmy-award winning media campaigns and community-based initiatives.

**Heidi Cashman** is a consultant for the Sunflower Foundation and serves on the Board of Directors for the REACH Healthcare Foundation. She previously served in Washington, D.C., as legislative director for a U.S. Senator, specializing in health policy. She holds a master’s degree in Public Administration from The George Washington University, where she was a Wolcott Fellow. She received the Distinguished Congress Staff award from the National Association of Community Health Centers, and the legislative staff award from a national rural health group.

**David Cohen** is a Senior Fellow at Experience Corps and Civic Ventures, the Board President of Global Integrity, and the Senior Congressional Fellow for the Council for a Livable World. He has been an activist, strategist and author for major social justice and political reform issues for nearly 50 years. He co-founded the Advocacy Institute, and is the past president of Common Cause.

**Susan Dentzer** is the Editor-in-Chief of *Health Affairs*, the nation’s leading journal of health policy, and an on-air analyst on health issues with *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* on PBS. Prior to joining the NewsHour, Dentzer was chief economics correspondent and economics columnist for U.S. News & World Report, and a senior writer at Newsweek. She currently serves as Chair of the Board of Directors of the Global Health Council, and on the Board of Directors of the International Rescue Committee, where she heads the Board’s Health Committee. She is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations, and the Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured.

**Andy Goodman** is a national expert in public interest communication. In addition to running his own firm, Goodman serves on the faculty of the Communications Leadership Institute. He is the author of *Storytelling as Best Practice, Why Bad Ads Happen to Good Causes*, and *Why Bad Presentations Happen to Good Causes*. 
Billie Hall is the founding president and CEO of the Sunflower Foundation: Health Care for Kansans. Prior to the Sunflower Foundation, she was the vice president for public affairs at the Kansas Heath Institute helping direct the organization’s health policy agenda. A Kansas native, she received an MSPH from the University of Missouri and returned to Kansas to pursue a career in community health planning, health care administration and health policy.

Melissa Ness is president of Connections Unlimited, Inc., a strategic advocacy, organization capacity and leadership support firm and a consultant to the Sunflower Foundation. Melissa works directly with organizations in developing and improving programs in each of these areas. She has been an attorney for low income elderly clients, advocacy coordinator, general counsel and chief operating officer for a major child welfare organization in Kansas and is a graduate of several leadership programs, including the Advocacy Institute in Washington, D.C. In addition to her legal career, she holds a masters in Community Organizing from the KU School of Social Welfare.

Jennifer Schmidt is a consultant for the Sunflower Foundation. She also hosts and produces “Ask Your Legislator” on Kansas public television. Her previous experience includes working in Washington, D.C. as senior counsel to a U.S. Senator, counsel to a U.S. Senate subcommittee, and associate at a law firm, and in Kansas as chief of staff to a Kansas Speaker of the House of Representatives. She has taught political science, law, journalism, and communication studies at Kansas universities, and has published in the Harvard Journal on Legislation.

J. Shafer is news director of Kansas Public Radio (KPR) at the University of Kansas. He is also managing editor of the Kansas Public Radio, which provides news and information to other public radio stations in Kansas and Missouri. He also currently serves as the local host for NPR’s Morning Edition on KPR. Before joining KPR in 1995, J. spent ten years as a commercial radio and TV newsman. During his career, he’s filed stories for nearly every major radio news network in the nation – including ABC, NBC, CBS, AP, UPI, the Mutual Broadcasting System, NPR and the BBC. J. has also worked for the U.S. State Department, traveling to central Asia to teach broadcast journalism at newly independent radio stations in the former Soviet Union.

Ann Wiesner is a principal with Grassroots Solutions, a grassroots organizing consulting firm founded on the idea that in politics and public policy, people matter. As principal, Wiesner oversees the strategic direction of projects that seek to engage supporters, build comprehensive grassroots training programs, advance short- and long-term policy change, and strengthen the democratic process. Prior to her work with Grassroots Solutions, she worked in the nonprofit sector for over fifteen years doing community organizing, leadership development, training, and communications strategy.