**Stories of Outsized Impact featuring Jane Leighty Justis: Leighty Foundation**

“I’m Jane Leighty Justis- I’m a director of a small family foundation that my father started in the 80s. We’re an all family board, we’re geographically dispersed. One of our major funding areas- which is my passion- is building the capacity of organizations to utilize volunteers more effectively. We’re sort of in the perfect storm of decreasing resources and increasing needs. Organizations are going to have to be better and better at being able to utilize all their resources, including their human resources and their volunteer resources. We started an initiative three years ago in Colorado Springs working with executive directors, starting with focus groups and saying to them, “What are your frustrations in working with volunteers? What’s your vision for what they could be doing in your organization? How can we as a funder help?” We really have made this initiative up as we went, working with about twenty to twenty five nonprofit organizations- primarily with their executive directors- and they said, “We need training not only for ourselves, but for our board member and our director of volunteer services.” So, we have provided training, we’ve brought them together to do peer learning sessions. We’ve given some very small grants- one to three or four thousand dollars- to help them build their volunteer capacity within the organization. We really have moved the needle in Colorado Springs, because now there are executive directors of about twenty five organizations that realize that they’re the culture builders; they’re the ones who will make an organization’s attitude about not just “volunteers are nice” but, “how do we use that phenomenal renewable resource of energy and utilize it well?” We have a tremendous bank of stories now of how that impact has changed some of the organizations. Our Center for Prevention of Domestic Violence, for instance, was saying they have one center in the middle of town, but there are so many areas where there are victims of domestic violence that can’t make it to that one center. With volunteers now, they have opened three small centers that are open a few hours, a few times a week, and they’re staffed entirely by volunteers. The impact of how many more victims are we able to see and to help in the system than we were before is so much greater than they ever could have paid for with a paid staff. We’ve got great examples of that in many cases. My message to funders is: this is not funding a program. A lot of funders will say, “We don’t fund volunteerism; we fund early childhood education” or “we fund conservation.” Volunteerism isn’t a program; it’s a critical strategy for how we get missions accomplished of all those different organizations. The return on investment is phenomenal. I would invite as many funders as possible to put this in their popery of capacity-building opportunities.”