

Mulligan helps build foundation for community



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Terence Mulligan moved to Napa in 2004 to become president of the Napa Valley Community Foundation.

The nonprofit works sort of like a philanthropic investment bank, Mulligan explained.

“We marry dollars to needs,” he said. “By pooling money, people can get more bang for the buck.”

The foundation supports a wide range of organizations such as the Cope Family Center, Boys & Girls Clubs of Napa Valley, Puertas Abiertas, Clinic Ole, Land Trust of Napa County and public schools, among others.

“I think that foundations can play an important role in making a community better,” he said. “I have a very privileged job.”

How has the foundation changed since you came on board?

We’ve managed to grow from tiny to small on my watch. We give away \$2 million to \$3 million a year. In five years we ought to be giving away \$10 million a year. We’ve made a lot of progress in terms of growing our foundation, but there is still a lot more work to do.

How are you going to grow the foundation?

My hope is that there will be a couple of game-changing sizable gifts that lift us from small to medium to large size. It’s likely to be from people who want to leave a legacy and see the foundation as a watchdog for their intentions over time. That’s not a pipe dream. That will happen. It’s just a matter of when.

Any other changes?

A big change in our focus has been that we want to encourage people to make a contribution of any size to the foundation. We’ll take \$100 or \$500 a year. Let’s get to people who can make a gift directly to a project that might appeal to them (now).

What’s new at your business?

We will soon be unveiling the Giving Orchard, located at Community Resources for Children and Cybermill on Claremont Way. We will be dedicating the trees to people in our community who have left a legacy through the Napa Valley Community Foundation.

Which three people would you most like to have dinner with?

Johnny Cash, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Groucho Marx.

How did you get into this business?

My dad worked in state politics in the Sacramento Valley in the 1970s. I grew up around people with a keen interest in public affairs — people who wanted to make things better for others, in some way. After college, I spent several years working in public policy in Washington, D.C., and discovered that it wasn't my cup of tea. About a dozen years ago, I started looking at jobs in the nonprofit and foundation sectors. I was fortunate to be hired into a senior management position at a community foundation in Silicon Valley, and from there I got recruited to lead the Napa Valley Community Foundation in 2004.

What is the biggest challenge your business has faced?

Lack of brand awareness. Nobody grows up in America knowing what a community foundation is. At best, people confuse us with a private foundation, which gets associated, for better or worse, with wealthier folks. I tell people we are a foundation for everybody: that I work with school teachers who retired in their 60s as well as entrepreneurs who retired in their 40s; that we pool resources from hundreds of local families and businesses, and use the leverage we gain in doing so to tackle the most significant challenges facing Napa County — both today and in the future.

What was your childhood ambition?

Part-time quarterback for the Oakland Raiders, part-time marine biologist.

What job would you like to try/not like to try?

Try: Jazz musician.

Not try: Investment banker.

Which other business persons would you like to see featured in “10 Questions for...”

Pete Richmond, Silverado Farming.

Patrick Gleeson, MF Enterprises.

Brenda Perry, Napa Valley Accounting.

More from Mulligan

If you could be anywhere right now, where would you be?

At the beach on a sunny day with my family and friends.

What was your first job?

I was a groundskeeper at Denio's Farmers Market and Auction in Roseville. Orange safety vest, push broom, 105-degree summer days and plenty of asphalt.

What's on your to-do list?

More time with family, more reading, more travel.

Whom do you most admire in the business world?

Warren Buffett. I appreciate that he encourages others who've been successful to give back.

What is one thing you hope to accomplish in your lifetime that you haven't yet?

Working overseas.

What's something people might be surprised to know about you?

I do a decent impersonation of a commercial airline pilot, which is the result of working as a management consultant for three years right after business school. I was always on a plane.

Reach Mulligan at 254-9565, ext. 11.