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Lessons from Year 1 of the Kaleidoscope Project's Partnership with the Northeast Community Coalition

The Kaleidoscope Project, an initiative of the John Rex Endowment (JRE), is built on two big ideas:

1. The places where young children spend time can have a lifelong impact on their social and emotional wellbeing.
2. The relationships children have with each other and adults can build their resilience, give them the tools they need when times are difficult and equip them with confidence as they grow into adulthood.

[Building on lessons learned in Phase 1 of this project](#), the John Rex Endowment funded Phase 2 of the Kaleidoscope Project. Phase 2 centers racial equity as both a process and an outcome of the work, and increases the community's role in philanthropic decision-making. Through its role as an intermediary of JRE, the Kaleidoscope Project is exploring what it means to shift power back to community. The initiative engages communities in designing places and spaces supporting the social and emotional wellbeing of black and brown children and serves as a learning laboratory for the overarching commitment of the John Rex Endowment to racial justice.

In 2020, the Kaleidoscope Project began a community-led philanthropic process at Beacon Ridge, the affordable housing component of a purpose-built community in Southeast Raleigh. While that project is not yet complete, [findings from the Beacon Ridge project have been discovered and reported](#) by the Partners for Impact evaluation team. This initial set of learnings has paved the way for continuing the exploration of a community-led philanthropic process. In 2022, the John Rex Endowment began a 5-year, \$1,927,433 investment in the Kaleidoscope Project to continue building its community-based philanthropic model.

To further explore this new approach to philanthropy, in 2023 the Kaleidoscope Project engaged with the Northeast Community Coalition (NECC) located in Wake Forest, NC to promote the social and emotional health of children and their families where they live, learn, and play. This document provides an introduction to the Kaleidoscope Project's process to engage NECC as a community partner. It describes the lessons learned in this first year as the Resident Leaders

have explored the needs in their community and identified a specific project to support the social-emotional needs of children. This reflective document begins by articulating the Kaleidoscope Project's evolving intervention to disrupt systems that perpetuate the inequities that are disadvantaging black and brown children and are compromising their social-emotional wellbeing. It incorporates and builds on the lessons learned in Phase 1 at Beacon Ridge. The second section shares some direct results from the NECC Project. Finally, the Partners for Impact evaluation team explores what authentic community-led philanthropy requires for success.

THE KALEIDOSCOPE PROJECT

A [systems map recently created by the Partners for Impact Team describes the Kaleidoscope Project's systemic change efforts to improve the social-emotional wellbeing of children](#). The intervention aims to shift individual mindsets, build community power, change organizational policies and processes, and create a network committed to improving the social-emotional wellbeing of children. The Kaleidoscope Project is building the individual and organizational capacity needed to improve places and spaces for children to support their social-emotional wellbeing, and is actively creating a network of individuals and organizations committed to changing the ecosystem around children in Wake County. This section provides an in-depth look at the project with NECC and articulates the elements of systems change implemented by the Kaleidoscope Project staff.

[Partnering with the Northeast Community Coalition](#)

In planning its next five years of work, the Kaleidoscope Project mapped priority regions of Wake County, identifying some community organizations as potential partners. Based on learnings from Beacon Ridge, the Kaleidoscope Project staff assess organizations based on three explicit values. They look for organizations that are:

- Community-led: driven by community members each step of the way
- Racial-equity focused: serving children and families experiencing disadvantage due to structural racism
- Ready for change: prepared and responsive to engineering growth and shifting mindsets for impact that lives beyond the active engagement with the Kaleidoscope Project

The Northeast Community Coalition, a resident-led organization in Wake Forest, develops resident leaders, and supports resident advocacy. NECC is an all volunteer organization that meets monthly and is led by people of color living in the community. The area has [a rich history](#) dating back to immediately after the Civil War when freed slaves built their homes in this neighborhood.

NECC preserves the proud history of the community, promotes and provides resident access to advancement opportunities, and projects a positive future for their neighborhood and the surrounding Wake Forest area. They use a three-pronged strategy that includes community

investment, community improvement, and community involvement.¹ The coalition has five main priorities: community events and engagement; food security and wellness; programming for families; youth and seniors; and sponsorships and fundraising.

In late 2022, the Kaleidoscope Project staff met the Resident Organizer who leads the Northeast Community Coalition. After discussing the values and work of each organization, they agreed that NECC would be the Kaleidoscope Project's next partner for its community-led investment project. In February of 2023, NECC brought together a group of residents to work with the Kaleidoscope Project on identifying and developing an initiative to support the social-emotional wellbeing of children in their community. Ten Resident Leaders participated in these initial meetings; one person had to drop out after the first three months. The group has met once every two weeks for one hour, with Kaleidoscope Project staff providing dinner and facilitating the organizing process. In the year since they began meeting, these Resident Leaders have served as advisors, connectors, data collectors, and visionaries.

Kaleidoscope Project Staff and the Values They Live

Since its inception in 2016, the Kaleidoscope Project has evolved and adapted as it strives to achieve a more equitable approach and results in its work. As the project's evaluation team for the past six years, Partners for Impact has consistently noted that the values of the staff are key - not just to who they are but to how they do their work within communities. Both Kaleidoscope Project staff members are committed to centering the members of the community and working at their pace; to building the capacity of the community to assess and design the interventions to improve the social-emotional wellbeing of children; to modeling ways to share power and avoid further marginalization or harm; and to investing in the community.

Moving at the Pace of the Community

As with any group that meets over an extended period, attendance from week to week at NECC Resident Leader meetings has waxed and waned, but has largely remained consistent over time. The Resident Leaders are navigating parent and child schedules, and life's planned and unplanned activities. After securing a new job, one Resident Leader had to step away from the meetings and participate in other ways. Although the pace has been slow, **the Resident Leaders remain committed to this project because they see that their ideas and perspectives are sought, valued, and used to move the process forward by the Kaleidoscope Project staff. The Kaleidoscope Project staff is committed to moving at the pace of volunteer leaders who have committed to participate and give their time and energy to the work.** The Kaleidoscope Project staff reflected on the pace, commenting,

In so far as accomplishments, one of the things that I was pleasantly surprised with was the level of consistent engagement that continues from February till today - as far as the meetings, people coming, the energy that people are having. Sometimes in community work you can start really fast and then it tails off and dies down. And I mean we've lost a person or two here or there, but it seems like the energy in the room

¹ <https://www.wfnecc.org/about>

[has remained high] and I think a lot of that goes to the leadership of [the Resident Organizer] and other members as well. But the leadership of [the Resident Organizer] specifically has not let things die down, not let the energy, or not let the initiative go to the wayside, if you will, or die or let us lose focus.

Building Capacity, Understanding the Local Community, and Emerging Best Practices

The early meetings of the Resident Leaders and the Kaleidoscope Project Staff focused on getting to know each other, understanding the Kaleidoscope Project, and brainstorming ideas for investing in places and spaces for children. The group identified three ideas for supporting the youth in their community. Following conversations about their own perceptions about their community, the Resident Leaders discussed ways to gather additional input from their neighbors.

Each summer, NECC hosts a Wake Forest Juneteenth Celebration on a Saturday afternoon close to June 19. With the support of the Kaleidoscope Project staff, the Resident Leaders used this community gathering as an opportunity to collect data from attendees. At a covered booth, the leaders presented to celebration participants three poster boards decorated to reflect the ideas they were considering. Each visitor to the booth was asked to vote their preference by placing a star sticker on one of the three options. The results of this process were 15 votes for youth mentorship, 18 votes for place enhancements, and 27 votes for youth activities.

Collecting input from the community at the Juneteenth event not only provided information to guide the project, it also developed the data collections skills of the Resident Leaders. With the guidance of the Partners for Impact evaluation team and the Kaleidoscope Project staff, the Resident Leaders reflected on the data they collected at the Juneteenth event. They questioned whether it was enough to understand what the community wanted and if the process adequately accessed a representative sample of respondents. They used the discussion to further articulate their own desires for the community and identify next steps. This included repeating the data collection process with young people at a local church, which provided similar results to the Juneteenth event. In July 2023, Partners for Impact walked the Resident Leaders through an exercise to narrow their focus, leading to the identification of bullying as a significant issue for middle schoolers in the community. Many of the adult Resident Leaders had personal stories about middle schoolers being bullied and wanted to see middle schoolers in the community:

- Having positive social interactions
- Staying in school
- Feeling safe and willing to ask for help in school
- Understanding how to cope with bullying, stress, pressure, and other mental health challenges

They hoped for a space with fairly strict rules that did not allow bullying and provided access to professional resources and educational activities. They desired a place where adults could join the young people as models who can listen and affirm the challenges these students have in school. They all acknowledged that public schools are not equipped to facilitate the desired

impact of neighbors engaging with and supporting each other. **In describing the characteristics of their envisioned space and program, the Resident Leaders's ideas reflected the best practices identified in the research on which the Kaleidoscope Project was founded.**

The Resident Organizer said, "We are really seeking a place for them. They say they don't have anything to do after school. A place for them to come and feel part of the community. They can have their own place where they can just come together, relax, talk, socialize, whether it's doing homework together and just being themselves."

Modeling Shared Power and Amplifying Voices

An intentional focus on sharing power with community members distinguishes this phase of the Kaleidoscope Project from its earlier iterations. This intention defines not only the overall approach, but also the commitment of the Kaleidoscope Project staff. Sharing power means centering the residents' voices, enabling the community to make choices about the project and honoring those decisions, encouraging Resident Leaders to develop and test new skills, and being open to ideas and opportunities as they emerge from the community and its Resident Leaders. **By respecting the contribution of every Resident Leader, the Kaleidoscope Project staff created a culture of trust, leading to more sustained engagement.** One staff person described the transformation in the Resident Leaders and their willingness to speak up,

Something I observed was just watching the growth in each individual participation. I think that's been really great to see. When you talk about our first couple meetings, there were the same voices that felt most comfortable in those settings, like voicing their opinions, they felt comfortable doing so. A lot of times it has to do with even just personality types, like people who are outgoing versus people who are shy, just basic stuff. But something that I did notice was that individuals who do tend to be quieter did start to flourish. ... I think Miss B's another one. She also tends to be really quiet. But now if you ask her or engage her, she'll definitely engage back. And I think that has also been awesome to see. Where before when you would do that, she might say one or two things, but now she'll be like, okay, I'm gonna give you my opinion because I've been sitting here quietly, but now that you ask, I'm very happy to share with you.

The staff shared about another Resident Leader:

And I think one of our 13-year-olds was a great example of that. Where she began - she just didn't really know how to share her opinion. She kind of stayed quiet but then through a lot of getting comfortable with her setting and feeling comfortable saying, she now will speak out. She went through this progression from not speaking at all, to being a little shy to, I'm gonna tell my grandmother and then maybe I'll say something if she pushes me to, I don't need to ask permission, I'm just gonna say what I need to say. And I think that was a really great progression of showing, okay this is what being in a comfortable setting

can do for you and you actually feel like, OK, I have a voice at the table now and people are gonna listen to me and they're not gonna think my suggestion is silly.

The Resident Organizer remarked on the impact that the Kaleidoscope Project staff's ability to listen and act on what they have heard has had on the younger Resident Leaders and the older people in the room, as well,

I was going to bring that out about her. She's 13 and she was quiet there at first. But when she felt like you all listen, and that she has that freedom to give her opinion, her thoughts, she does that now and it's really great to see her come out of that little quiet shell and express herself and her concerns for the youth... And that's the atmosphere that's there in our meetings and that's what you all bring. You bring that to the meeting where people can feel that comfortable - even a child. We've had someone even younger to come in with her mother. And I mean she was just great at expressing herself. So yeah. It's just a good atmosphere to be in.

Centering the community in practice also requires flexibility and empathy. The Resident Organizer commented that the understanding shown by the Kaleidoscope Project staff was different from what she had expected going into the partnership, particularly as the ability of all residents to participate has changed over time. The staff has remained supportive and nonjudgmental, the Resident Organizer said. "No judgment. Right. Yes. Yes. Absolutely."

The Resident Organizer also described the positive energy the Kaleidoscope Project staff brings to every meeting:

They bring energy ... that makes a huge difference. When they come in and they've got that caring spirit. I'm here, I'm here, I care. We see they care ... and how they engage and listen to people - it just makes a big difference. We have a partner. This is just different ... They bring the smiles. They bring their concern. They listen and it's just great. It is a great fit and we have thoroughly enjoyed them.

Investing in the Community

The Kaleidoscope Project not only partners with communities but also brings funding to them. The project budget includes some unrestricted funding for NECC, stipends for Resident Leaders' attendance at meetings, as well as money for the Resident Leaders to invest in their community. The Resident Organizer described the importance of a partner showing up not just with ideas and requests but also money:

Kaleidoscope also brings funding to help and that's huge. They bring funding to help and this - I just cannot put it into words. With all their energy, with all their concerns, they're listening, they're getting involved. They bring funding to help. We are concerned about the youth. We're

not only concerned but we're gonna show them that we're gonna help them as much as we can through their listening, through their engaging, through their funding and so it's just different. And when you have those things into one, it's a great partnership. And we're thankful for our partners that we have, but when they come with those things that are named and not just saying, we're here, we want to listen, we want to see what we can do.

The Kaleidoscope Project staff also invests in communities by using their networks to connect local leaders with outside expertise and additional resources. They said,

One of the other things I think that helps this partnership is that, from our side, we try to bring to the table not just the financial resources, but also the people resources and maybe a connection or two. The opportunity to be connected to folks who have other knowledge-bases that maybe even we don't possess....The asset mapping is just a perfect example of that. Just one, identifying the assets within the community, like the people in the room, but also then saying, okay, we - Kaleidoscope - have a couple people that do this and do that, and that just again helps us, the more brain power we can throw at the project the better off we become.

Finding a New Space in this Place

Once the Resident Leaders narrowed their scope to creating a safe space and anti-bullying programs for middle schoolers, they turned their attention to finding a location. The Northeast Community has a rich history with many life-long residents, but only a few community resources. Based on the 2021 Northeast Community Plan, three faith congregations and six additional community buildings/public spaces are available as community-based resources, including a closed Rosenwald School Campus.² While the neighborhood is close to downtown Wake Forest and other institutions, the Resident Leaders agreed that the Northeast Community has no safe space for the neighborhood's middle school children.

The Resident Leaders explored the available options, including a community center run by the local government. The Kaleidoscope Project Staff captured the importance of **keeping the power to control a space within the community**, rather than with an external entity. They said,

When it comes to the community center, I just don't feel like this is the right space. And most of it comes down to, when you talk about wanting something to live within a community that's government run – there's pros and cons to that. And the concern at the end of the day: the power is still in the government's hands. At any point in time they can say, we don't want to do this.

² Town of Wake Forest. Northeast Community Plan: Our Neighborhood. Our Vision. December 7, 2021 p. 16-17
Retrieved from <https://online.flippingbook.com/view/370447640/>

In late 2023, the Resident Organizer learned of an unfinished basement at the Faith Tabernacle United Holy Church within the Northeast Community. The pastor of Faith Tabernacle UHC had hopes for renovating the space into a youth center but had not yet secured adequate funding. NECC's Resident Leaders had expressed an interest in working with a church to create their programming for middle-schoolers. The Resident Leaders and the Kaleidoscope Project staff met with the leadership of Faith Tabernacle UHC, visiting the space and discussing options and possibilities. As a result, NECC's programming will occur in the church's space and the Kaleidoscope Project has enrolled Faith Tabernacle UHC as its next project for improving places and spaces to support the wellbeing of children.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND LESSONS IN YEAR 1 AT NECC

At the end of the first year, the Partners for Impact evaluation team spent time reflecting with the Kaleidoscope Project Staff, the Resident Organizer, and the Resident Leaders. Participants considered what they had accomplished and learned since the partnership between NECC and Kaleidoscope began. They were most excited about identifying a focus for their work and adding a key resource to their neighborhood for families living in the Northeast Community.

The NECC Resident Team Leaders identified many other accomplishments. In one year, they:

- Identified concerns and needs of youth in the community;;
- Collected data and identified priorities at the Juneteenth event and at one of the churches in northeast Wake Forest. The Resident Leaders met more of their neighbors, and let the public know what the Kaleidoscope Project was about. They began building more relationships with the residents of their community;
- Agreed on the need for an anti-bullying campaign project;
- Gathered more feedback from young people and their parents at a housing complex owned by the Wake Forest Housing Authority;
- Committed to designing programs to give kids a safe place to gather, learn, and relax;
- Reached out to the schools to discuss after-school programming, discovering the many complicated layers of bureaucracy and competing demands on teachers and administrators;
- Found a location and a new partner that can provide space for programming.

Lessons Learned

The NECC Resident Leaders also shared with the evaluation team many lessons that they learned in the first year. First, **they learned ways to engage the members of the broader northeast Wake Forest community**. They acknowledged that a history of organizations not following through on their promises to the community has led to many people being reluctant to get involved, and to share information about their needs. As part of this project, the Resident Leaders wanted to spend time learning more about their neighbors and more intentionally reflect on their own views of their community. Building trust and relationships is important, and learning to gather authentic feedback is a concrete skill that has helped the Resident Leaders understand the concerns of their community. More specifically, **they appreciated learning how**

to develop questions and plan and implement an approach to collecting input from the community.

The Resident Organizer has benefitted from observing the Kaleidoscope Project staff's approach to listening and building trust with the Resident Leaders, saying,

I've learned to listen more and to let people just express themselves. We have a 13-year old now. She's 13. Gosh, they (the Kaleidoscope Project staff) just respect that young lady - her views, her concerns. And it has helped me as the leader of NECC and the work that we do with youth. We have to listen and [the Kaleidoscope Project staff] have the ears and the heart that listen and care and make a difference. And they want to make a difference in the work that they do for the youth. And that is just what we need this day and time – partners who want to come in and make a difference, especially in the lives of the youth.

Resident Leaders stressed the importance of keeping the picture of improving the community foremost in their mind. They desire to make Wake Forest a better place and ensure that youth are able to find within this community benefits that build their futures. This motivated the Resident Leaders to continue to seek input from the community, even though reaching some of their neighbors presented challenges and required additional rounds of data collection. The process helped them identify what questions were missing from the original data collection process at the Juneteenth event. **They also recognized the benefit of this process in promoting their visibility in the community.** Their demonstrated commitment to change and caring for the community encourages others to participate. They want to continue engaging the community with periodic feedback opportunities. They are committed and understand the importance of staying focused on what they want to create in the community.

Resident Leaders gained knowledge and skills in other areas, as well. By evaluating the needs expressed by the youth, their own lived-experience with middle-schoolers in their families, and the various resources available in their community, **they learned how to design a program based on assets and gaps in the community.** Some Resident Leaders became more acquainted with the rich history of the Northeast Community. **They identified best practices for improving the social-emotional wellbeing of the children in their communities.** From this work, they shaped their desired outcomes of this program to include fostering pride in their community among youth. They also hope to identify and cultivate local mentors so that families do not have to travel to other towns to access activities and opportunities for their children.

A Place With No Space

Working with the Northeast Community Coalition takes the Kaleidoscope Project in a new direction. In previous phases, the Kaleidoscope Project has partnered with organizations that own or have control of facilities with spaces for children and families. Working with NECC, the Kaleidoscope Project is collaborating with a coalition of residents from households in a

As NECC's Resident Leaders prioritized the issue of bullying for students in the middle-school years, the question of space to provide programming became more pressing. The group considered the existing institutions within the boundaries of Northeast Wake Forest, including a community center operated by the local government; the [W.E.B. Dubois School](#), a now defunct Rosenwald School; and nearby facilities owned by the public school system. An important discernment process emerged to balance community ownership, safety and support for students, and access to services, e.g., walkability or proximity to transportation. One of the Kaleidoscope Project staff members reflected on the challenges, saying,



A focus on the goal and a commitment to the youth in their community kept the Resident Leaders motivated and moving forward, even while the space question remained unanswered. This process took time and patience until the Residents Leaders found a partner in Faith Tabernacle UHC. The prospect of partnering with the church re-energized the Resident Leaders as the project began to take a more defined shape. The Kaleidoscope Project staff continued,

Kaleidoscope Project staff are working with both partners to divide the work. Faith Tabernacle UHC will be focusing on upfitting the unfinished basement to accommodate after-school programming as well as to meet the needs of their congregation. The NECC Resident Leaders are putting their energy into designing programs for middle-schoolers in the space. The church is also planning to work with the town government and county school system to have a bus stop

in front of the building where youth can be dropped off after school. Both NECC and Faith Tabernacle UHC are finding additional partners and community resources, and learning the role other institutions may be able to play in the next phase of this project. The staff acknowledged this as the right next step for NECC and for the Kaleidoscope Project, saying,

This feels like this is what was missing, that puzzle piece that was missing. It just felt right and I was just so happy being in that room with everyone and everyone seeing and being like, 'What are we starting?' It just reaffirmed in that moment that we now have our "where." And that was such a big moment because without a where, there was no "what." And so, it was just like we needed those two things in order to really work collaboratively together to make this project happen.

DISCUSSION - CREATING SOMETHING DIFFERENT

As the Partners for Impact evaluation team reflects on the past year with the Kaleidoscope Project staff, lessons are emerging based on the work with both Beacon Ridge and NECC. The table below compares and contracts characteristics of the two communities. Despite differences in form, elements of the approach that are key for successful community-led engagements are emerging.

Characteristics of Beacon Ridge	Characteristics of NECC
• A new apartment complex with residents who did not know their neighbors prior to the Kaleidoscope Project	• A well-established community with a rich history and multiple households, including single-family homes, where some neighbors have known each other for many years
• A strong nonprofit organization with paid staff participating in the project	• An all-volunteer organization with no paid staff supporting the project
• Residents prioritized aesthetic changes to support a more beautiful property that better reflects their community	• Residents identified the need for a safe space and anti-bullying resources for middle school children.
• Project focused on changes in spaces at the apartment complex	• Project requires an additional partner with space for programming; residents expressed interest in connecting with a church within the community
• Changes were limited by the property managers and the original design of the apartment building	• Project will require the collaboration of multiple community partners for its success
• Funding supported a mural on an exterior wall that focuses on all residents and depicts positive relationships among families	• Funding will support afterschool programming for middle schoolers

- Budget: - DHIC - \$10,000 - Community members, incentives/food, and materials - \$20,000 - Mural Project - \$70,000	- Budget: - NECC - \$10,000 - Community members, incentives/food, and materials - \$17,000 - Programming for project at Faith Tabernacle UHC - \$ 73,000
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What does it take?

As an initiative of the John Rex Endowment, the Kaleidoscope Project serves as a testing ground for implementing grantmaking processes that align with the Endowment's values. The John Rex Endowment has asked, "What does this work truly take?" Answers to this question will emerge and evolve with each effort the Kaleidoscope Project undertakes. Experiences at Beacon Ridge and with NECC are providing some preliminary answers.

Values-Driven Staff

Since Partners for Impact began evaluating the Kaleidoscope Project in 2019, a consistent theme has been the mindset shift that is essential to the success of changing places and spaces and to sharing power. The Kaleidoscope Project staff's ability to articulate and live into these specific values drives this shift in thinking among project partners. The Resident Organizer described it, saying, "You all have the personality to go with it that makes a big difference"

The Kaleidoscope Project staff show up at meetings as their authentic selves. They are genuinely interested in what people have to say and listen to what is on the residents' minds. They mindfully support the group in feeling seen and heard. Going far beyond merely checking a community engagement box on a checklist, they model the values of power-sharing in their interactions. Their hearts are in community-based work, as one staff member expressed,

I want to make sure [the Resident Leaders] know that they're trusted. We don't want anybody to feel like their opinion doesn't matter. [The other staff member] was super not forceful, but just purposeful about making sure that the 13-year old could speak and had a place to speak and that her voice was heard and that her opinion was written down. It was noted and it was valued as much as anyone else's opinion. And I think that not only helped the 13-year old but it helped her grandmother. But it also helped everyone else in the room to say, wow, If they will value her opinion, my opinion will be valued as well.

The Resident Organizer described the impact this has on the community and the sense of freedom the Kaleidoscope Project staff create in the NECC meetings, saying,

You know, the freedom to really express their concerns, the freedom to do that and then it's not like they're wrong. But to express themselves because all that matters. It's data that matters. And so the freedom to express your concerns about where you live, your community. So yes,

having the freedom to really give their thoughts and their concerns. And it's received, and we get the feedback from the Kaleidoscope Project staff and it's all just positive. It's just a positive voice where everybody just feels that freedom. That makes a big difference too. It adds to what we're trying to accomplish if people have their freedom to give their concern, their thoughts about the project.

Resources

As noted above, the Resident Organizer stressed the importance of the funding that the Kaleidoscope Project brings to communities. For small, grassroots organizations like NECC, this demonstrates vital and authentic support for their community-based work. So often other organizations, including philanthropic and government agencies, invite local communities into partnerships but no money accompanies their request. They seek the connection to communities that grassroots organizations provide but often fail to compensate the groups for their time and effort. This approach extracts resources from the community organizations rather than providing support and increasing their capacity to serve their constituents. Recognizing that investments in community-based organizations as valued assets are critical to an equity-based approach, the Kaleidoscope Project brings not just funding for the space-improvement projects but also compensation for the partner agencies and stipends for community members who contribute their time and expertise. The Kaleidoscope Project acknowledges the contributions of grassroots organizations and the expertise of lived experience with its funding.

True Partnership with Leaders in the Community

The work with NECC has illustrated the importance of deep connections within communities. A strong partnership with community members requires trusting relationships built over time. One of the Kaleidoscope Project staff commented on the crucial role that the Resident Organizer's years of relationship-building within the community and with other agencies in Wake Forest and Wake County play in the project, saying, "You bring so much to the project. We could not do this project without you. There just wouldn't be any kind of way. You're so well connected; you love your community so much and this project would not be happening if it were not for you."

Building Skills by Doing

Individuals and organizations need support building their skills to create the change they want to see in their community. The Kaleidoscope Project's efforts in this regard fall under capacity-building but they are also more than that. Participation in the projects enables individuals, such as the Ambassadors at Beacon Ridge and the Resident Leaders from NECC, to develop skills to better understand their community. They learn to engage their neighbors in identifying opportunities and challenges and creating solutions. Along the way, the Kaleidoscope Project staff's approach and pace ensure that community members are supported when trying something new. Tasking people with responsibilities they do not have the skills to accomplish can unintentionally cause harm. Project staff check in regularly to make sure

community members have the resources and confidence to take on new challenges. One result is that the Resident Leaders in Wake Forest have increased their engagement and participation in the process. A Kaleidoscope Project staff member reflects,

I step back and think about the very first meeting and then I think about the last meeting I was at, and the difference between every individual in that room, including us. My view of it is that very first meeting - I feel like we did a whole lot more talking then than in the last meeting. And it's not that we don't still talk as Kaleidoscope, but when you think about it, ... we have morphed into more facilitating than we have talking or pulling things out. And I think there's more to come.

They also recognize that the Resident Leaders are willing to put in the effort to get the work done. The mutual trust between the Kaleidoscope Project staff and the Resident Leaders encourages everyone in the room to collaborate and learn together. A Kaleidoscope member described it,

Something I really noticed is that even when we are playing out the meetings and we say, "Hey, I'm gonna do this activity and I'm gonna let them decide." We don't worry about "Okay, what if they don't get there?" Because we know they're gonna get there, right, or we know that the communication is gonna happen until they finally get there. And so I think that is something I've just really noticed and I think that has come from the atmosphere that has been created.

Moving at the Speed of Trust

With both Beacon Ridge and NECC, the Kaleidoscope Project staff have consistently embodied the phrase, "moving at the speed of trust." In Wake Forest, Resident Leaders meet for one hour every two weeks, with some communication between gatherings. In the meetings, the Kaleidoscope Project staff allow time not just for planning but for relationship-building with and within the group. Their commitment to facilitating participation and centering community voice has built trust and encouraged authentic engagement. One of the Kaleidoscope Project staff says, "This group together has created this capacity or this atmosphere of trust. And in that atmosphere of trust, that builds the capacity for people to speak out, to say what's on their mind, to really give their opinion, to give their input, solutions, identification of the problem, solutions and ideas around what needs to happen next and what are the next steps." Moving at the "speed of trust" creates the foundation for programs with deep roots in the community they serve.

A Sense of Purpose and Excitement

Within the NECC project, the Resident Leaders' sense of purpose to support the wellbeing of their community's young people has kept the project moving forward, even when they have encountered barriers. According to one of the Kaleidoscope Project staff,

I think there's great purpose. So along with the people is the purpose. They understand why they want this done. They understand the need for this and the consequences if it doesn't get done. I think that a lot of times people respond out of a need. This needs to be done. I have no choice but to get it done. And I think the folks in this group and in this community understand that this needs to get done. They have a care for this community and the care for the kids in this community and their wellbeing, they understand that we cannot afford to just not do it.

The opportunity to partner with Faith Tabernacle UHC has sparked more enthusiasm as the visionary goals become more of a reality. The Kaleidoscope Project staff sense the feeling of accomplishment and energy that is emerging, saying,

It's just more excitement for what's to come. I feel like this is always one of my personal favorite parts of the project ... just because it gets to the part where we're really starting to craft. And I think it's also a time where other people really enjoy it too. You definitely see the energy igniting in some ways. Like the last meeting, I'm sure the Resident Organizer can also share as she was there, too. The energy was just so high as people were starting to think through solutions ... If we need more funding, let's problem solve and let's think through these solutions. And I think it was just really fun to watch people light up and start thinking, Ok, I know so-and-so and I know this. And it was just really fun to see that group brainstorming in a way that was probably a little different than we've seen before because people are now volunteering information and working collaboratively. And so I think we're definitely going to see more of that, as the weeks develop and for me that's always personally ... a fun thing to watch and to be a part of.

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This report tells the story of the first year of the Kaleidoscope Project's work in Wake Forest's Northeast Community. We have described the relationship-building between the Kaleidoscope Project staff and the Northeast Community Coalition, the process of prioritizing the social-emotional needs of middle-schoolers in the community, and the steps taken to find a partner with space for programming. The next stages and the partnership with Faith Tabernacle UHC as the third project in this phase of the Kaleidoscope Project will provide additional lessons. Together with the Kaleidoscope Project staff and the community partners, the Partners for Impact evaluation team will continue exploring the process and interrogating the assumptions of this community-based philanthropy model. Each step forward provides a new opportunity to create a new way of centering community and turning philanthropy on its head.