



## **The Alleghany Foundation Announces First Full-time Executive Director**

After an extensive search, the Board of Directors of The Alleghany Foundation is pleased to announce the appointment of Mary Fant Donnan as the Foundation's first full-time director. Donnan will join the foundation staff in early January, and she and her family will be relocating to the Alleghany Highlands from their home in North Carolina soon thereafter.

The Board is thrilled to find such a capable and experienced leader in Mary Fant Donnan. The search committee reviewed over 150 sources and prospects and Mary quickly emerged as the committee's unanimous choice to lead the Foundation.

Since its creation fifteen years ago, The Alleghany Foundation has been committed to the health, well being and vitality of the people and communities of the Alleghany Highlands, a part of western Virginia embracing Alleghany County, the City of Covington, the Town of Clifton Forge, the Town of Iron Gate, and neighboring communities. Fundamental to the Foundation's mission is its commitment to being "a catalyst for positive change in the Alleghany Highlands."

"I am excited to have the chance to be part of the Alleghany Foundation's work and to be joining this community," commented Donnan. "Though I have lived in different places, my roots are in southwest Virginia. I am eager to learn about the community from the people who make it so special and to explore ways the foundation can strengthen ongoing efforts and develop new opportunities for all."

Donnan brings to her new role a mix of experience in philanthropy, the non-profit sector, state government and education. Since 2001, she has been a program officer with the highly regarded [Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation](#) in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, where she has primary responsibility for the foundation's Community Economic Development Focus Area.

Prior to her service at Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, Mary served as policy analyst and director of research and policy at the North Carolina Department of Labor, where she focused on workforce and economic development; previously,

she was development director for the North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research and a music teacher in the Grayson County, VA public schools.

Donnan was a Friday Fellow through the Wildacres Leadership Initiative and an American Marshall Memorial Fellow through the German Marshall Fund. Throughout her career, she has been active in her church and various neighborhood associations, and she has led several community development efforts, notably in North Carolina, where the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation has funded projects in all 100 counties.

Donnan grew up in Grayson County, Virginia. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Music from Davidson College and a Masters degree in Environmental Studies from the University of Adelaide in South Australia (which she attended under a Rotary International Graduate Fellowship). She is a 1996 graduate of Leadership Triangle, a regional leadership development program in North Carolina.

While a senior at Davidson College, Mary received the Goodwin-Exxon Award, given for “outstanding service, compassion, and friendship to the college community.” Mary’s ongoing interests include family, music, gardening, and home renovation.

As the Foundation’s first full-time executive director, Donnan will succeed Beth Webb, the part-time executive director whose untimely death in December 2009 was one of the catalysts for the recent search.

One of Donnan’s early mandates will be to work with the Board of Directors and the larger community to refine and implement the Foundation’s strategic plans. Last year, the Foundation completed a process called *Reflective Practice*, developed and conducted by the consulting firm [MDC, Inc.](#), a process designed “to help philanthropic institutions build more prosperous, equitable and sustainable communities through strategic grantmaking.”

The search committee consisted of Bill Withrow; Michele Ballou, M.D.; James Eller; Harrison Fridley; and George (“Chip”) Snead. Board President Charles Kahle was an ex-officio member of the search committee. The Foundation’s advisor throughout the process was [BoardWalk Consulting](#), an Atlanta-based executive search firm specializing in service to foundations and nonprofits.

The Board also wishes to acknowledge the special role played by Interim Executive Director Ward H. Robens, Jr. As noted by Board President Charles Kahle, “Ward’s steady hand at the Foundation has been invaluable since last December. His willingness to step out of retirement and into the interim leadership role was a real gift to our community.”



“We are blessed to be in a place with such great people and natural resources” continued Kahle. “With the appointment of Mary Fant Donnan as Executive Director, the Board is confident that The Alleghany Foundation will continue to help the region build on its assets to produce opportunities for all its residents to succeed.”

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**About The Alleghany Foundation:** The Alleghany Foundation was established in 1995 with \$35 million in proceeds from the sale of the Alleghany Regional Hospital. The Foundation uses multiple forms of capital to refocus the region’s aspirations and goals, build the capacity of our grantees and partners, seed and support innovation, and measure and mark progress. For more information about the Foundation, please visit [www.AlleghanyFoundation.org](http://www.AlleghanyFoundation.org).

