



## Why a Foundation?

Serving this year as the chair of the American Counseling Association Foundation has given me the opportunity to travel to meetings and conferences both within ACA and the larger mental health community. It's an opportunity I've welcomed. But in these travels, I found there were times when a counselor would ask, "Why does ACA need a foundation?"

For me, that was a surprising question, perhaps because I've been involved with ACA and the ACA Foundation for so many years and know firsthand the important work of the Foundation. But I've come to realize that the Foundation is not something that we — as counseling professionals — can, or should, take for granted. This Foundation exists for very real and compelling reasons. Allow me a minute to explain why we have the ACA Foundation and how its programs are vital to our profession.

ACA supports counselors in a variety of areas. From lobbying and certification efforts, to education and communication, to coordinating ACA divisions and so much more, ACA has played a major role in fostering professionalism in counseling. But no one organization can be everything for every member. At times, there have been needs that ACA simply was not in a position to fulfill directly. Sometimes that's because of budget considerations, sometimes it's simply because a need requires immediate and nimble action that's difficult for a large organization to provide. In such cases, the ACA

Foundation has been able to step up to the plate.

One of the best examples was the response to Hurricane Katrina approximately four years ago. In the aftermath of that tragic event, it became clear that the devastation had directly impacted a number of counselors and counseling organizations along the Gulf Coast. At the same time, this was an area facing an enormous need for counseling services.

That was when the ACA Foundation quickly created the Counselors Care Fund. Within a very short time, counselors around the nation provided more than \$53,000 in funding to create grants that helped counseling professionals who had been impacted get back into operation. Today, having seen the success of those efforts, we are looking at ways to revise the Counselors Care Fund program to allow it to be responsive to counselors who are in need due to a variety of events or reasons.

The ACA Foundation has taken a leadership role in providing the counseling profession with help in areas where real needs have been identified. The Foundation's Growing Happy and Confident Kids program provides school counselors nationwide with libraries of books to help increase emotional literacy among elementary school-age children. Its numerous awards programs help bring recognition to counselors who have demonstrated real leadership and outstanding performance within our profession. And its support of graduate

students in counseling through its essay competitions and ACA Conference scholarships has provided valuable aid to these new professionals. The Foundation's efforts have helped those just entering our profession to become more involved and to better understand the level of professionalism for which we constantly strive.

In today's troubled economic times, it is more important than ever for the counseling profession to have an organization that is able to help those in need, both within our profession and within the communities our members serve. The focus of the ACA Foundation is on identifying opportunities to improve, support and strengthen the profession, and it is an organization capable of responding quickly when needs arise.

Why does the ACA Foundation exist? Because it's doing needed good work that might otherwise remain undone ... and because it's helping make better our profession and ensuring a stronger future for counseling. These are some of the reasons why the ACA Foundation exists and certainly why I'm involved with and support the Foundation. I hope these reasons will inspire you to get involved and support our Foundation as well.

Find out more about the ACA Foundation and its programs at [acafoundation.org](http://acafoundation.org). ♦

Howard Smith is the current chair of the ACA Foundation.

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