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Head of David Rockefeller Fund Aims to Help Small, Overlooked Nonprofits



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By Alex Daniels

As the incoming leader of the David Rockefeller Fund, Lukas Haynes won't be able to funnel vast amounts of cash to build universities or create major public-health institutions, as some previous philanthropic efforts of the Rockefeller family have done.

His job, he says, is to seek out small nonprofits that have been overlooked and

give them money to help build momentum. "We can serve as a talent scout and a first-mover," he says.

Mr. Haynes plans to use his experience—gained first as a speech writer for then-Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and most recently as vice president of the Mertz Gilmore Foundation—to help establish connections between smaller projects and key governmental and philanthropic players. It's a way, he says, to leverage the relatively small fund, which gives out about \$1.5-million in grants each year.

Small and Nimble

As the fifth generation of Rockefellers takes control of the oil clan's philanthropy, they will continue to support David Rockefeller's priorities: the arts, criminal justice, the environment, and community programs in areas outside New York City, in Maine and New

York, where the Rockefellers maintain residences. But, says Michael Quattrone, Mr. Rockefeller's grandson and the fund's chairman, the grant maker needed to be more active in identifying promising ideas in their infancy.

Mr. Haynes, he says, has a track record of picking emerging issues in need of support and bringing larger donors together around an idea.

"We're a smaller and potentially more nimble organization than the preceding philanthropies" bearing the Rockefeller name, Mr. Quattrone says. "Because of that, we want to make an outsized impact through greater strategy. We chose Lukas as someone who could lead those conversations."

That's what Mr. Haynes was able to do at the Mertz Gilmore Foundation, where he marshaled limited resources.

For several years, for instance, dozens of military officials had grown increasingly alarmed that climate changes could erode U.S. military readiness. But their concerns, such as the possibility that sea-level rise will overwhelm Navy ports, had not resonated with policymakers.

After meeting Francesco Femia, founding director of the Center for Climate and Security, at a conference, Mr. Haynes quickly saw that philanthropy could bring experts throughout the military together to coordinate policy on the issue. Mertz Gilmore's initial \$150,000 grant to Mr. Femia's group in 2012 has sparked giving from other donors, bringing in nearly \$390,000 since then.

'Strategic Savvy'

Another grantee, Lovisa Stannow, executive director of Just Detention International, says Mr. Haynes was a trailblazer among philanthropists in supporting programs to reduce sexual assaults in prison.

An initial \$75,000 grant from Mertz Gilmore in 2009, she says, helped her group develop standardized rules for prison safety and collect data required under the 2003 Prison Rape Elimination Act, a law the group championed. After the Mertz Gilmore grant, Just Detention secured grants of about \$1.4-million from the U.S. Justice Department and the Prospect Hill Foundation.

"Almost all donors claim they want to be bold and innovative, but the reality is, they often aren't," she says. "Lukas had the courage and strategic savvy to bet on the issue."

By seeking out projects at the start-up level, Mr. Haynes hopes to identify potential grantees for other foundations, including larger elements of the Rockefeller philanthropic family, like the Rockefeller Foundation, which gave out \$160-million in grants in 2013, and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, which provided more than \$27-million in grants in 2013, the most recent year for which figures are available. Being backed by the one of the oldest names in American philanthropy might flush out donations from other wealthy individuals who, Mr. Haynes says, are sometimes more conservative in their giving.

"To have David Rockefeller's name associated with progressive philanthropy is a great validator," he says. "They feel safe coming to the table."

Lukas Haynes, executive director, David Rockefeller Fund

Education: B.A., international relations, College of William and Mary; master's degree, international relations, Oxford University

Career highlights: Regional strategy adviser, Oxfam GB; speechwriter, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright; New York director, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation; vice president, Mertz Gilmore Foundation

Salary: He did not disclose. His predecessor, Marnie Pillsbury, was not compensated.

Favorite book: *Amazing Grace: The Lives of Children and the Conscience of a Nation*, by Jonathan Kozol

Correction: *An earlier version of this article included a quote from Francesco Femia that has been deleted.*

Send an e-mail to Alex Daniels.

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