

# BX Foundation has Significant Impact in Short But Remarkable History

## *BX of Central Ohio Celebrates 125th Anniversary*

In its young life, the Builders Exchange Foundation has already had a high impact. In less than two decades, the Foundation has distributed \$1,245,958 in grants and with assets of \$4.2 million, it's a vital part of the BX story with much to celebrate as the association marks 125 years of operation.

Exchange board members first discussed the concept of a Foundation in 1998 amid a growing concern in the construction community. An increasing shortage of experienced, educated employees – at all levels of the industry – was viewed as the most urgent challenge facing BX members. For several years, member task forces had explored ways to accelerate workforce development initiatives, and realized there were no simple, short-term solutions.

Instead, their passionate discussions with industry employers moved the BX board to launch a big, long-term approach: the creation of a 501c3, non-profit charitable foundation to fund a variety of efforts over time. Those efforts would focus on recruiting and developing the industry's most valuable resource – its people.

It was an enormous project for a local trade association to undertake. The prior two years of research were nothing compared to the hard work that lay ahead building a new organization and funding a permanent endowment.

### **After R&D, organization is next step**

The Exchange board named a Foundation Planning Committee in late 1998 – Chair Randy Sleeper (Bruner Corp.), Grant Douglass (Hanlin-Rainaldi Construction Corp.), Andy Kerr (Basic Electric Supply), Dan Lorenz (Performance Site Management), Bill Oberfield (Oberfield's, Inc.) and Jim Rost (Nationwide Realty Investors, Inc.). These volunteers spent countless hours with BX staff, reviewing the administrative plan and legal documents needed for the organization to apply for its non-profit status with the IRS.

That initial filing noted the purpose of the Builders Exchange Foundation was to “support expanded efforts in workforce development, industry image enhancement, employee education opportunities and improved industry business practices.”



**Speakers making the Foundation's case at its fundraising kickoff were Randy Sleeper (Bruner Corp.), top, Lewis Smoot, Sr. (Smoot Construction) and Cathy Blackford (Builders Exchange).**



Members of the first Foundation board of directors were, from left: Jim Rost (Nationwide Realty Investors, Inc.), Cathy Blackford (Builders Exchange), Gabe Reitter (Reitter Wall Systems, Inc.), Doug Anderson (Buckeye Ready-Mix LLC), Treasurer Rob Setterlin (RWS Building Co.), Vice President Kathy Gatterdam (The Columbus Coal & Lime Co.), Bill Oberfield (Oberfield's, Inc.) and President Randy Sleeper (Bruner Corp.).

By mid-1999, the Foundation's IRS "advance ruling" period was approved and a leadership team for the inaugural campaign was set. Campaign Co-Chairs were Lorenz, Sleeper and Lewis Smoot, Sr. (Smoot Construction), who stepped up to provide visible, strong support and major gifts to jump start the fundraising momentum.

These respected leaders were joined by the campaign's "Honorary Chairs," Andy Anderson (Anderson Concrete Corp.), the late Tom C. Fitzpatrick (Elford, Inc.) and the late Sam Shuman (Julian Speer Co.). Not only did they give significant donations – like the Co-Chairs – they made personal visits to many members asking them to do the same.

## Kickoff campaign exceeds goal

Before meetings began with prospective donors, the BX board made several important decisions that laid the groundwork for success. First, they agreed that the Builders Exchange would cover all fundraising costs for the campaign: from allocating significant staff time, to hiring a part time advisor to printing and mailing solicitation materials. That way, every dollar committed by companies and individuals went directly to the inaugural endowment.

The Exchange also contributed the first gift of \$350,000 from its Reserve and Scholarship Funds. Finally, to show 100 percent board support for the new Foundation, every director made a five-figure gift to the effort.

This combination of enthusiasm and generosity – "putting their money where their mouth was" – achieved an extraordinary outcome. Of nearly 100 personal solicitations made by industry

**September 2001**  
**Campaign Updates**  
to Major Donors of The Builders Exchange Foundation

**The Builders Exchange Foundation "Founders Circle" Members to Date**

Members of the Founders Circle are individuals or companies who have contributed \$25,000 or more to The Builders Exchange Foundation. Thank you for the momentum you've created!

Anderson Aluminum Corp.  
Anderson Concrete Corp.  
Baker Concrete Construction, Inc.  
Bruner Corp.  
Buckingham, Doolittle & Burroughs, LLP  
Columbus Builders Supply, Inc.  
Columbus Coal & Lime Co.  
Compass Construction  
Compensation Consultants, Inc.  
Continental Building Systems  
Custom Air Conditioning & Heating Co.  
Dorsey Construction Co.  
Dynalectra Co. of Ohio  
Elford, Inc.  
Exoval Contract Management, Inc.  
Frank Gates Companies  
Hamilton Parker Co.  
Hanslin-Rainaldi Construction Corp.  
Haslett Heating & Cooling, Inc.  
George J. Igel & Co., Inc.  
Inside Outfitters, Inc.  
The Kokosing Group  
Limbich Co.  
Lincoln Construction, Inc.  
Lithko Contracting, Inc.  
Frank Messer & Sons Construction Co.  
Mid-City Electric Co.  
Miller Pavement Maintenance, Inc.  
Mock Woodworking Co.  
Oberfield's, Inc.  
The Paul Peterson Co.  
Performance Site Management  
RWS Building Co.  
Reitter Wall Systems, Inc.  
Renier Construction Corp.  
Renovators, Inc.  
Russell Construction Co., Inc.  
Sauer, Inc.  
Schottenstein, Zox & Dunn  
Smoot Construction  
Speer Mechanical  
Wanner Metal Work, Inc.  
Kirk Williams Co., Inc.  
WinnScapes/Schmidt Nursery Co.

**BXF endowment pledges hit \$2.5 million!**

This 2001 newsletter to Foundation donors celebrated the fact that, in less than two years, the campaign had exceeded its goal.



leaders, 90 percent resulted in donations. The original \$2 million goal for the inaugural campaign (2000 – 2002) was revised to \$2.5 million, and final tallies hit \$2,579,775.

Meanwhile the Foundation completed its structure as a charitable non-profit, separate from the Exchange, including the formation of a board of directors and business plan. Although larger pledges to BXF were being paid over several years, the fledgling organization quickly put endowment earnings to work.

## New projects, expanded scholarships

The first grant made by the Foundation in 2000 was for the Builders Exchange to produce a video on construction career opportunities, aimed at middle and high school students. The video was used as part of the BX “Student Outreach Program,” a speakers’ bureau of members who visit area classrooms to promote the industry. While the video has long since been replaced, the outreach effort continues as a high-demand BX activity. In the years since that first BXF award, Exchange volunteers have spoken to more than 71,000 students in greater central Ohio.

Another early grant was for an innovative construction internship project for architecture students at The Ohio State University. BXF paid a graduate student’s stipend to coordinate the placement of summer interns from the Knowlton School of Architecture with BX member employers. During its run from 2003 to 2007, a total of 100 students worked in the field to learn about construction materials, systems and processes firsthand.

The Foundation’s launch gave a rapid boost to a longstanding BX hallmark: its scholarship program, in existence since 1958. When BXF received 501c3 approval by the IRS, the Exchange board moved its scholarship fund to the new charitable organization. The non-profit status of BXF encouraged numerous tax-deductible donations from individuals as well as companies, many specifically for scholarships.



**With a non-profit charitable organization administering the BX scholarship program, donations – and distributions – increased quickly.**

Results were noticeable. While the Exchange had awarded a total of more than \$109,000 from 1995 – 1999, in the first five years that the Foundation administered scholarships, grants grew 66% to more than \$181,000. By the mid-2000s, members began to endow perpetual, “Named Scholarships” to honor company leaders or milestones, with 20 of these funds managed by BXF today. This year alone, \$80,000 in scholarships were distributed by the Foundation.

## Building leaders becomes BXF legacy

Along with programs that encourage the future workforce, the Builders Exchange and the Foundation immediately sought ways to assist the industry's current talent pool. Once again, the BX convened member task forces to identify a professional education need that was not being met. In 2007, the Exchange created a groundbreaking initiative in partnership with the OSU Fisher College of Business: The BX Rising Leaders Institute.



**Designed with the support of a Foundation grant, the BX Rising Leaders Institute graduated its first class (above) in 2007 and has been sold out every year since.**

Taught by MBA-level faculty from Ohio State, the year-long offering was aimed at high-potential middle managers in member firms. Content development costs were paid with a \$50,000 grant from the Foundation. In addition to building a network of young professionals, the Institute's 12 sessions expanded their business knowledge and improved their leadership skills.

The Rising Leaders Institute was a complete departure from previous BX education products, with its significant

investment of time and tuition by participants. Nonetheless, the Class of 2007 sold out quickly, and has continued to do so for 11 consecutive years.

The Rising Leaders innovation was so successful that five years after its inception, the Exchange responded to member demand by adding a similar course for top-tier managers. The BX Executive Leadership Experience (BXLX) includes 11 sessions taught by nationally-recognized industry experts along with a personal coaching component for each student.

Like the Institute, BXLX received Foundation grants to underwrite its original curriculum. It has also been an annual sellout, recently graduating its sixth



**Industry interest in a leadership program for high-level managers led the Foundation to fund the BX Executive Leadership Experience, whose first class (above) launched in 2012 and has had full enrollment in each of the succeeding years.**



consecutive class. Member interest in these high-caliber courses continued to grow, resulting in a third leadership program – this one for field superintendents and foremen.



**BXF also supported creation of the BX Field Leadership Excellence (BXFlex) series, just completing its third consecutive year.**

The BX Field Leadership Excellence series (BXFlex) graduated its first class in 2015 with the model used before: the Exchange designed the eight-session schedule and the Foundation funded its startup. BXFlex just graduated its third class of field leaders and anticipates years of full enrollment ahead.

To date, 331 employees of BX member firms have participated in The Rising Leaders Institute; 128 in BXLX and 89 in BXFlex. These world-class leadership programs have been a triple-win for the Foundation. They are transforming individual participants. They are accelerating leaders within Exchange member firms. And they are having industrywide impact: six of the current BX and BXF board members are graduates of the programs!

In addition to providing seed money for new leadership initiatives, the Foundation also supported efforts as diverse as a marketing campaign for the OSU Construction Systems Management department and a professional speaker at this year's Ohio Construction Conference. Along the way, the organization's boards of directors have been careful stewards of BX members' generous donations.

Because most of the volunteers who crafted the Builders Exchange Foundation are still active in the industry, they have enjoyed a rare experience – seeing their bold idea become a reality.