



Diann Farnsley
Franklin's Promise
Port St. Joe, Florida



*"The Fellowship has greatly expanded our ability to perform our mission. Diann created new relationships with funding organizations. She was instrumental in preparing seven applications and to date has assisted with securing over \$30,000 in grants for the Conservation Corps of the Forgotten Coast. **Joe Taylor, Executive Director, Franklin's Promise Coalition, Inc.***

I'd worked from home as a Business Operations Professional for IBM since 2004. Because I worked from home, I felt very isolated from the Port St. Joe, Florida community. I wanted to expand my horizons. I sought out an Encore Fellowship with the Franklin's Promise Coalition in Apalachicola, a community of about 2,300 that is also the Franklin County seat. Franklin's Promise is a partnership of people, organization, and agencies who want to improve the quality of life for Franklin County residents. To fulfill this mission, the Coalition serves as a community advocate and a one-stop shop for social service agencies and contributing non-profit organizations.

The Conservation Corps of the Forgotten Coast (CCFC) is a program of Franklin's Promise Coalition, a comprehensive youth development program for young adults 18-25 years of age and veterans up to 29, and summer internships for ages beginning at 16 years old which provides participants with job training, academic programming, leadership skills, and additional support through a strategy of service that conserves, protects and improves the environment, as well as community resilience. I helped write approximately ten state grants for the CCFC to provide these opportunities for youth and young adults, who may or may not have earned their high school diplomas. Those without diplomas can earn credits online to complete their credential as part of the program.

The area is heavily tied to the local seafood industry and incomes are very low, opportunities are limited, and youth often have complicated family backgrounds with issues involving alcohol, incarceration, and other problems. Many of the youth haven't had quite the foundation other kids have had. The goal is to provide the CCFC youth the opportunities to further their education and develop their skills to be more employable in the workforce.

Typically, on Monday through Thursday afternoons, the Corps members go out and work in construction, conservation/habitat restoration, bagging oyster shells to create living shorelines, and other projects to meet the community needs. Friday mornings are reserved for goal setting and prior week review, character-building and leadership. The youth are held accountable and learn there are repercussions for not achieving goals. They learn the importance of building social capital and that was reinforced to me as well. It is very important to network and build relationships. It's been a rewarding experience for me, and an opportunity for me to learn more and appreciate what people are really going through. Before, I took everyday community life a bit for granted, but now I feel so much closer to community resilience and the local history and culture.

In addition to my capacity building efforts through grant writing, I had the opportunity to attend "Habitudes" training, a leadership curriculum founded by Growing Leaders in Atlanta, Georgia. I acquired a certification as a Habitudes facilitator. I view this as an extra credential I now have under my belt; one that's useful to grow and teach today's youth and young adults in a world that continues to become more interconnected, advanced, and tied to technology.

This fellowship has been my opportunity to gain valuable experience and exposure to the nonprofit sector. I hope it will position me to have greater visibility and presence in the community and make a difference. Coming from a person who'd worked in a home office for 13 years, it helped to fulfill my desire for social connection. It allowed me to feel more a part of the community and to deeply appreciate the community's rebounding from the BP oil spill in year 2010. In return, I felt appreciated as I was given the sweetest luncheon and a gift of pearl earrings in an oyster shell on my last day serving my Fellowship.

I'm especially very proud of the CCFC members who show they do not give up. They're so willing to work and earn different certifications such like chainsaw, construction, living shoreline, community emergency response, etc. The work is there in the coastal community and Franklin's Promise provides a pathway for people to get out and get the jobs done.

I don't want to be idle now. I'm open to part-time and service-type work. I have more of a passion for youth than I realized, and I'm thinking that I might like to get on the substitute-teacher list, part-time. I learned I'm not so tied to a profit world, the big salary's not driving me. At this time in my life, if I can pursue more of my passions and the social side, then I'm ok with getting away from spreadsheets and numbers. I need more than that! There are other things I want beyond the paycheck.