

# A Family Planning Legend Moves On to Support the Next Generation

Tine Hansen-Turton and Nicholas Torres 06 January 2011

It was mid-June when we got to sit down with Dorothy Mann, who was set to retire from 33 years at the Family Planning Council at the end of that month. Dorothy admitted it was hard to believe it had been 33 years, observing, "I reinvent my job every two years" to create growth and diversity. But, Dorothy also allowed, "I'm retiring from the Family Planning Council, but not from work, because I found something I really want to do next." Before Dorothy would spill her beans about her new and exciting endeavors, we sat down to interview a phenomenal woman leader and legend in her own right.

When you think about Title X and family planning, the first person who comes to mind for those of us in health care is Dorothy Mann. Dorothy took over the Family Planning Council (FPC) in 1977 and took it from a small nonprofit agency to the fifth-largest agency of its kind in the country. "We see 155,000 patients, and only California, New York, Texas and Florida state planning programs surpass us in size." The FPC's growth has not happened by accident. Dorothy steered her organization's growth

and success by successfully creating very deliberate and thoughtful partnerships. She operates by instinct and gut, and it's paid off. "Mutual trust is the key ingredient to all relationships, and at the end of the day relationships are everything," she says. It is how Dorothy has been so successful in finding partners that enhances the mission of the FPC. And "once you are in [as an FPC partner], you're in." In Dorothy's more than three decades with the organization, only once was a partner agency defunded.

Dorothy says that if a program struggles or is failing, it's not the program's fault; in her estimation, in that situation, the FPC is not doing its job to support the organization. Throughout her tenure, she has advocated for her partner agencies on issues ranging from securing funding to changing a state or local policy. And those who have worked with Dorothy over the years know that, when she wants something, she is impossible to resist. She proudly admits, "I will jerry-rig to get to yes, whatever it takes."

Dorothy's service philosophy has been relatively simple, yet government and nonprofits could learn a lesson or two from her. Dorothy counsels that "People will come if your service philosophy is right," but "programs have to lower the threshold for people to access services. If it is a challenge for people you serve to get to you and if you create barriers, you're not doing your job."

So what is Dorothy up to next and what is igniting her passion? We were pleasantly surprised to learn that

Dorothy's next move, and one she's eased into over the last few years, will be to mentor the next class of executive leadership of small and big nonprofits. She encourages younger leaders to push for change. "The older leadership is hanging on too long to their jobs," although, as Dorothy also notes, "the economy has not made it simple [to leave]." The challenge Dorothy sees is that "people hang on too long and lose their vision and creativity. And most are fearful of trying something new." When asked what her parting words are for the next generations of leaders, she says, "If you want to make your mark and push leadership change, do it, take risks and have courage; you can only win." True Dorothy Mann style!

**Dorothy Mann is currently the President of Pine Street Partners, a consulting firm specializing in health care, management and mentoring of new leaders in the non-profit sector. After 33 years, on June 30, 2010, Dorothy retired from her position as Executive Director of the Family Planning Council. She and her husband William White have 5 children and 9 grandchildren, the youngest are two month old twins, they now enjoy traveling and spending more time with their family.**