

**David Dodson, a trustee of the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation, a family foundation in North Carolina, and a close observer of the Irwin-Sweeney-Miller family giving programs in Indiana, observes that a family's values and motivations are critical to the family foundation. But, he continues, the great purpose of a family foundation should not be the perpetuation of family interests but the impulse to be of value to something beyond the family circle.**

Dodson believes that what characterizes the two family foundations he knows best are the curiosity and compassion with which they approach their foundation work. What families choose to commit to and support should reflect their passions, he advises. But it doesn't end there. Dodson encourages creative family foundations to ask themselves how they can take what they care about and use it to build a community of concern that is alert and responsive to changing circumstances. What the family knows and loves is the logical place to begin a rich process of philanthropic inquiry into what the community needs and how they can serve it.

Dodson notes that the Miller and Babcock families don't seek to perpetuate old ways of doing things but strive in each generation to understand the needs and opportunities facing their communities of interest. The issues may change or they may stay the same, but what a family foundation perpetuates is their posture of caring and compassion.

Dodson observes that the family foundation that is able to construct a view of their giving with the community to be served firmly in the center is able to surround that core with an even more vibrant family circle. He says that such families are motivated to be of service outside the family and are likely to be both curious and compassionate in identifying ways to use their assets.

Those assets may even include advisors and networks outside the immediate family. He cites his fellow Babcock trustee, Carol Zippert, and her assertion that family foundations can include those who are members of the "family of blood" and those who are members of the "family of the heart" — related by interests and values but not genealogy. But, he cautions, if families think a foundation may be the instrument to save a troubled family, this is not it.