



THE LEGACY OF  
HOOP DREAMS SCHOLARSHIP FUND  
1996-2009

Painting by Palmer Smith in Honor of Susie Kay

## **LETTER FROM SUSIE KAY, FOUNDER OF HOOP DREAMS – JUNE 26, 2009**



Dear Special Friend of Hoop Dreams Scholarship Fund (HDSF),

This note is certainly one of a different nature than any I have written during the past 13 years. It is with a heavy, humbled and very grateful heart that I let you know that we have made the very difficult decision to bring the operations of The Hoop Dreams Scholarship Fund to a planned close, which will take place over the next few months. The HDSF Board of Directors on June 22, 2009 made a very responsible decision to adopt a resolution to dissolve our organization.

This decision was made after a great deal of thoughtful deliberation and analysis. For the past several years, we've been deeply concerned about the sustainability of our organization. Each year we continue to add new students, mentors, volunteers, and many others to our HDSF network. Our ability to raise funds to continue providing our students with resources to serve them in the way that has made HDSF so impactful and special has declined drastically in this particular economic climate.

Some have asked a very reasonable question: why not just downsize the organization and hope to see another day? Downsizing is not an option because HDSF has been so impactful over the years primarily because of the myriad programs we offer to our students. Eliminating certain programs, whether it's our extensive mentoring component or our intensive career preparation courses would drastically alter the very foundation this program was built on. HDSF has always worked to empower students and provide them the best possible chance to achieve their hopes and dreams of attending college and entering the workforce. We would not feel comfortable compromising the mission of the organization, which provides academic and career support to the more than 1,000 students who make up the Hoop Dreams family.

We will continue operations and remain a support system for all our constituents, in a reduced capacity, through fall 2009. We are extremely fortunate to have enough funds in reserve to be able to fulfill all of our existing obligations. The students in our program who recently graduated high school will receive their 2009-2010 scholarship awards in full. Our students currently matriculating through college who were awarded renewal scholarships will receive their full awards also. What we cannot do, however, is promise scholarship dollars beyond the 2009-2010 academic school year. With our new fiscal year beginning September 1, 2009, and the likelihood of raising enough funding to sustain our organization for another year bleak at best, we did not want to risk the likely scenario in which we ran out of funding abruptly and were unable to fulfill our obligations to all of the extraordinary people who make up HDSF. We are now focusing on the painstaking details of ensuring that we wind down the organization in the most respectful and responsible way possible.

While Hoop Dreams will be dissolved, we will work diligently on ways in which the spirit of Hoop Dreams may live on and continue to benefit the kinds of deserving young people who inspired me to start the organization back in 1996.

On a personal note, there are no words to express the depth of gratitude and love I feel for so many that have believed and supported this journey through the years. Indeed, Hoop Dreams was more than an organization, it was a movement of people inspired as I was by the potential of young people and the good within so many across racial, geographic and socio-economic barriers in Washington DC.

Nearly 20 years ago, when I first walked through the doors of H.D. Woodson High School, to teach 12<sup>th</sup> grade American Government in the heart of Ward 7, an incredible life's journey unfolded. The love I felt for my students – young people who defy all odds in the heart of our Nation's Capitol, and who have a will and determination to succeed in spite of extremely tough circumstances – is all the inspiration a school teacher would ever need. Over the past couple decades, my students taught me and so many others, so much more than we could ever teach them. They remain a constant reminder of what it means to persevere and to defy the odds!

I have been driven by the unmistakable sense of disconnect that our students experience on a daily basis. They grow up a few miles from Capitol Hill and all its power, but it often feels like the two sides of Washington are worlds apart. Our students deserve all the support and empowerment in the world and I plan to remain committed to them in some form and I hope you will too. During the past 13 years, HDSF has worked to bring these two worlds together in pursuit of building trust, faith, and bridges to bring us closer together.

Due to your support, belief, love, generosity, faith, and commitment throughout the years, you have helped take us on a journey that allowed 1,000 D.C. students to attend college, and to be empowered through mentoring, career preparation, SAT preparation through the Princeton Review, and to receive academic college scholarships and so much more.

My father, Captain Howard N. Kay, who passed away in 1997, reminded me throughout his life, that the purpose of our being here is the impact we can have on someone else's life. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for making this all possible.

The spirit of HDSF and what we done together will live on in all of you and most certainly all of our extraordinary young people. The many memories and academic and professional resources we have offered over the past 13 years will be preserved on our website: [www.hoopdreams.org](http://www.hoopdreams.org)

With sincere love and appreciation,  
Susie Kay

**“Hoop Dreams was never a job; it was my life.” – Susie Kay**

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## **HISTORY OF HOOP DREAMS SCHOLARSHIP FUND**

### **INSPIRATION AND HISTORY**

At its core, the Hoop Dreams Scholarship Fund was inspired by Susie Kay's lifelong passion for human equality and bringing people together in the belief that strength comes from unity, not separation. Susie attributes this belief to her parents; they were a couple from different worlds. Her mother was an Italian immigrant and her father was Jewish. With their own differences and interactions with others, the family set an example of unity across diversity. Their family values were rooted in a belief that each person in the family, community, and beyond has immense value. They knew that lives are enriched when people connect, give of themselves and learn from one another. Additionally, Susie was raised to value education as the key to an infinite number of possibilities and empowerment. She witnessed her father's accomplishments as he reached the rank of Captain in the United States Navy.

True to his military role, Captain Kay's commitment to equity across diversity was deeply integrated with principles of democracy and responsibility to the community. This translated into key values that Susie adopted from an early age. The Kays recognized their own power as citizens in the context of a community where all people deserve a voice and access to opportunity. They believed that every member of society has an obligation to engage as an active participant in the world around them. And that when people are denied the opportunity to engage, it is not only unjust, but detrimental to society as a whole.

Family dinners in the Kay household included debates on current events from around the globe and locally, and a common theme: "what can we do." While Susie grew up in Hawaii and then on Rhode Island, in homogenous neighborhoods where it would be easy to turn a blind eye to the plight of those less fortunate, she was always acutely aware that there were others who did not have the privileges she enjoyed. More notably, she was compelled to reach out to the disenfranchised not as an act of charity, but because she felt deeply that inclusion was the answer to a richer life for everyone.

**“My Father, Captain Howard N. Kay, who passed away in 1997, reminded me throughout his life that the purpose of our being here is the impact we can have on someone else's life.” – Susie Kay**

At the age of six, Susie wrote a letter to *Zoom Magazine*, a youth-focused periodical. Susie described her dream of a world where “more good things happen than bad” and where people of different races and backgrounds could not only get along, but believe in each other. At this young age, Susie was preoccupied with the divides that were drawn along lines of race, socio-economic status and religion. At six and throughout her life, Susie recognized how complicated these issues were. However, she consistently throughout her life understood that the road to change was through one-to-one relationships.

While attending American University in the late 1980’s, Susie worked on Capitol Hill. Being part of a powerful political system that was focused on discussion about positive change and improving lives across the country, she was struck by the plight of people in disadvantaged neighborhoods just across the Anacostia River from the Capitol. The inspiration of what she saw accomplished on the Hill, coupled with the frustration of unwavering desperation she saw across the river was an incredible motivator. After graduating in 1986, Susie went to work for the Close Up Foundation, a nonprofit group that brings high school students nationwide to Washington to learn about government. In her role at Close Up, Susie was charged with implementing weekly workshops that would not only teach, but inspire and empower her students. She felt an immense connection to these young people and saw through their backgrounds so different from her own, to their common bonds. She identified in each one the potential to make a difference and was committed to ensuring them all the opportunity to do so. Weekly, Susie would take her students to the Lincoln Memorial where she would blast Martin Luther King, Jr.’s *I Have a Dream* speech over a boom box and engage her students in discussions about the civil rights movement, civic responsibility and the power of the democratic system. As her students came to find their own voices, Susie’s enthusiasm for them fueled her to do more as well.

Wanting to expand her involvement with youth, she applied to Teach for America, asking to be placed in a high-risk high school in Los Angeles. Then it occurred to her: “why go across the country when I could just cross the Anacostia River and work with kids in my own community.” Susie became employed as an American Government teacher at H.D. Woodson High School in D.C. All the students at Woodson were African American as were the overwhelming majority of teachers. It was located in one of the city’s most socio-economically challenged neighborhoods in Ward 7. This set in to motion what would be the most inspiring year of Susie’s life.

When Susie entered H.D. Woodson, the school and its surrounding community were overwhelmed by environmental factors that seemed insurmountable. It was 1990. The crack epidemic was escalating and neighborhoods East of the Anacostia River were engulfed by crime and despair. Most students at H.D. Woodson had at least one family member in prison. Few lived in two-parent

households. With violent crime and murder occurring regularly among the school population and their immediate families, survival was a daily challenge that too often overshadowed academic pursuits. In the face of struggling to stay safe and housed, the prospect of college seemed remote for the majority of Woodson students. In cases where young people did manage to set their sights on higher education or other academic goals, these dreams were often abstract as few had family members or close friends who had made it to college.

As she had throughout her life, Susie immediately transcended what differentiated herself from her students and found common ground with these young people. She delved into their world and absorbed everything she saw. While her goal, always, was to empower and inspire her students and to break down barriers to their success, she committed to understanding and never lost sight of the reality in which they lived. She acknowledged their challenges, but never accepted for them limitations, insisting on and assisting in their quest for success.

Susie's lifelong passion for equity and cross-cultural understanding converged with her experience at H.D. Woodson and the seed of inspiration for Hoop Dreams was planted. She did not yet know what road she would take, but she new was an urgent need for a movement that would galvanize people to connect and help combat the disparities that surrounded her.

**“This is the true joy in life - being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish, little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy; I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community and, as I live, it is my privilege - my privilege to do for others whatever I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work, the more I love. I rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is no brief candle to me, it is a sort of splendid torch which I've got a hold of for the moment and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations .” - Stephen R. Covey**

## SUSIE KAY'S VISION

The students Susie met at Woodson demonstrated hope, determination and perseverance in the face of tremendous challenges. Susie was simultaneously inspired by the student's fortitude and frustrated by their limited opportunities. For these youth, aspirations for graduation and the future were overshadowed by the fundamental goal to survive. Many students found college and career to be well beyond their grasp. Nonetheless, they worked hard and dreamed of successful futures, college experiences, good jobs and security. For most of these students, their only frame of reference for this kind of success came from television and movies. Few had parents or siblings who had gone to college. While living just miles from central DC, these students were completely disenfranchised from the opportunities Washington had to offer.

This disparity was highlighted for Susie by the fact that, while immersed in the daily lives of her students, she continued to live on the outskirts of Capitol Hill and her circle of friends and colleagues from the city's professional community remained an important force in her life as well. She realized that none of her friends from her life outside of Woodson had ever crossed the river to witness the challenges of this community or meet these remarkable students. At the same time, few of her students had ever toured the city's political buildings or landmarks, set foot in a professional office building, or accessed other city resources. Some students told her the only other white people they had seen in their neighborhoods were "cops, prostitutes, and drug dealers."

It was clear that without access to opportunity, most of these students would never realize their potential. Meanwhile, many of the people Susie knew who tried to affect positive change on Capitol Hill had little understanding of the plight faced by inner-city youth just miles away. Believing that people are inherently good and, if given the chance, instinctively want to connect with and help others, Susie set out to bridge together the two worlds of Washingtonians divided by the Anacostia River: high-risk inner-city youth and business professionals. Her goal was to open up new resources for disenfranchised students and promote understanding to the professionals in the city.

**In Washington, the Anacostia River is a communities of geography, race and socio-focused on getting people to cross the river Hoop Dreams provided opportunities for understanding and mutually-beneficial**



**figurative and literal divide separating economic status. The work of Hoop Dreams in both directions. Once the river was crossed, individual interactions that inherently fostered relationships among diverse individuals.**



## **BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS**

Susie began by bringing friends from Capitol Hill and various businesses to speak to her students in class. The dialogue that ensued was incredible. For example, Susie asked her neighbor and friend, Ari Fleischer, then Republican Spokesman for the House Ways and Means Committee, to come speak to her class. The students confronted him with difficult questions. While the discussion was heated, a connection was made. When Mr. Fleischer subsequently became U.S. Press Secretary, he hired two Woodson students as interns. While connections such as this were extremely meaningful, Susie had yet to identify a way to address the financial barriers that prohibited students from accomplishing their dreams. At the time there were not a lot of scholarship opportunities available to Washington DC youth. Even in cases where government grant funds were available, many of the students at Woodson could not even afford application fees, nor did they know how to navigate the complex government application process.



A mutual love of basketball and sports had helped Susie to forge a strong connection with her students and the game represented to her a common ground that traversed the divided city. When she saw the movie *Hoop Dreams*, the 1994 documentary about two African-American high school students in Chicago who were overcoming many of the same social and economic challenges as the students at Woodson, she was inspired. After discussing ideas with students and friends, in June 1996, Susie decided to organize a 3-on-3 charity basketball tournament to bring diverse youth and adults together to connect around shared interest and skills, to raise money for scholarships.

Susie's friends and students spent evenings and weekends on her living room floor planning for what they thought would be a one-time event held downtown on closed off streets. Among this initial group was Steve Boyd who remained very involved in helping the organization develop over the years. Beth Hayes also was dedicated from the beginning, as were countless others who would continue as active volunteers at various times over Hoop Dreams' evolution. The group recruited 32 teams and raised \$4,000 for academic college scholarships. Dozens of connections were made among inner-city youth and middle-class professionals.

Meanwhile, just a week before the tournament, Susie's father was diagnosed with Cancer. As a pivotal force in shaping Susie's commitment to help others, her father's deteriorating health reinforced in her the impetus to forge ahead with something bigger than a one-day basketball tournament. She wanted to affect others just as her father had positively impacted her life. This seemed even more urgent as he struggled to fight his disease

Tournament day came and, there, Susie's friends from Capitol Hill met some of the remarkable students Susie had taught every day. And the students began to experience being truly seen and heard by people from backgrounds very different than their own. Two-way relationships emerged. Men and women who had never set foot East of the Anacostia River were introduced to youth whose immense potential was stifled by tremendous obstacles. And these young people began to appreciate that there might be allies for them on the other side of the river.

In the weeks following that first tournament, Susie received countless calls from adults and youth who had attended, wanting to get in touch with someone they had met at the event. It was clear at that point that the tournament could not be just a one-time event. Seeing meaningful connections form between diverse adults and youth who might never have had the opportunity to interact with each other was powerful. In the months that followed, Susie began to see these connections foster a sense of hope in her students she had not seen before. Students who had not dared to dream of going to college or working in a corporate office came to believe that such a future was truly possible. In addition, people from Washington's professional and political corridors discovered that they had the means to help young neighbors to realize their academic dreams. With new access to institutions and individuals who believed in them and had the resources to support them, a changing path away from desperation and towards hope was formed.

This was the informal birth of the Hoop Dreams Scholarship Fund as a multi-faceted relationship building organization and more than that, a *movement* of people reaching out to and helping other people, one-by-one across Washington D.C. The year of 1996 was spent continuing to cultivate relationships between Washington area professionals and youth from H.D. Woodson with the objective of advancing educational and career goals for these young people. Economic, educational, and human equality bridges were just beginning. By early 1997, there was little doubt that there *would* be a second Hoop Dreams tournament and Susie's friends and students reconvened to plan for the event. In the summer of 1997, Susie Kay, was being interviewed about her 2<sup>nd</sup> annual community building and fundraising basketball tournament on Washington radio.

## **EDS INITIATES CORPORATE GIVING TO HOOP DREAMS**

George Newstrom, then President of Electronic Data Systems Federal, based in Washington, heard the broadcast and was moved by the work being done by Hoop Dreams. He called Susie and made a donation of \$10,000. Up until that point, the average contribution to Hoop Dreams had been \$50. The 1997 Tournament raised a total of \$17,000 for scholarships for Susie's students including new high school graduates and those continuing in college from the previous year. In addition to providing critical scholarship dollars, the EDS investment provided an example that helped to leverage other private dollars from businesses, foundations and individuals who care about the future of Washington, DC and its youth.

Meanwhile, Susie continued to plan for the next Hoop Dreams tournament, and build her base of volunteers and supporters. She continued to teach American Government at H.D. Woodson and provide individualized support to the many students she encountered in the classroom. While scholarships remained one focal point of the Hoop Dreams effort, relationship building and the breaking down of racial barriers remained the core of the organization.

In the classroom, Susie's daily interactions with students continued to break down stereotypes on a daily basis. Washington, DC remained entrenched in the crack epidemic of the 1990's and economic, crime and health disparities fed severe racial tension. In this environment, talking about college, careers, stable jobs and safe families was abstract in the context of daily survival challenges. Susie continued to insist that first hand exposure to opportunity and tangible progress towards goals was necessary to allow her students to believe in the possibility of their dreams.

## **OVERCOMING STEREOTYPES**

On both sides of the river, Susie found herself still trying to explain the experiences of another world just miles away. "You just don't understand" was a common theme in these discussions. The racial and economic divides resulted in fear that compounded disparity and Susie recognized that this fear was rooted in the "unknown."

Students whose experiences had left them wary of people outside their community saw Susie as the exception as they built trusting connections with her. Yet many parents and teachers in the school, jaded by years of bias against them, approached her with caution. Washington is, as a political city, home to many people wanting to make a difference. However, quite often motivations are a

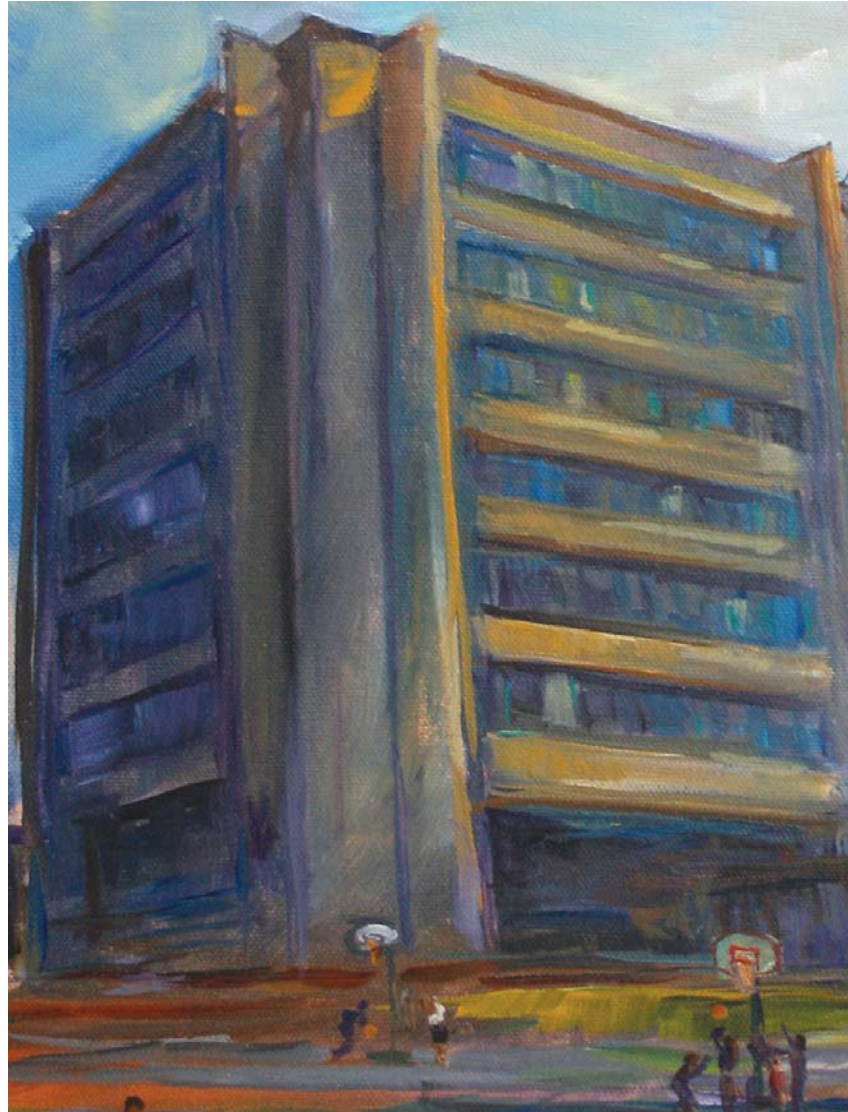
mix of altruism and egotism. In this context, it was difficult for many to grasp that Susie's solitary motivation in her work at Woodson and with Hoop Dreams was a belief in the good of people. Events such as the OJ Simpson verdict and the Jonesboro shooting continued to compound racial barriers, but Susie used these as opportunities for open discussion in the classroom. These events offered a platform for students to ask difficult questions about racism, economic divides and other inequities. For many of her students' questions, Susie had no answer. But her solution was to create more opportunities for her students to have positive experiences with adults from across the river to replace stereotypes with real individuals.

While the students recognized Susie as an ally, an unsettling sense of skepticism remained beneath the surface and it was often difficult for Susie to overcome the label of "other." While intellectually she understood why it was difficult for so many in the community to trust her, it also hurt her deeply. She recalled the words of her father "Nothing that is worthwhile comes easily." And she persevered, knowing that if she walked away, she would only prove those who doubted her sincerity and commitment right. Meanwhile, in meaningful moments every day, by all accounts, she was deeply imbedded in the school community: spending long days with her students, mourning alongside them at all too frequent funerals for students and family members tragically killed in neighborhood shootings, celebrating their achievements, and planning for their futures.

In April of 1998, Sari Horowitz published an article, *Lessons in Black and White: Crossing Color Lines in Room 406 with Miss Kay and Her Kids*, highlighting Susie Kay, her students and the Hoop Dreams effort. The article captured the racial reconciliation work Susie was accomplishing and heightened the profile of the Hoop Dreams organization. At the time, the technology boom was at its height and a number of internet-related businesses were settling in the local area, several of whom saw the article. One example was Pat McGettigan, founder of Landmark Systems and a successful self-made entrepreneur who, like many of Susie's students, came from a childhood marked by poverty and hardship. As was her style, Susie reached out to Pat and other donors, and forged personal connections. The corps of powerful Washingtonians involved as volunteers grew, and so did the list of donors committed to the cause. Personal connections enhanced the donor-organization relationship and laid a foundation for long-term commitments.

To read article, visit: [www.hoopdreams.org/news/wpost1.htm](http://www.hoopdreams.org/news/wpost1.htm)

**The most successful mentors were those who, like Susie, did not walk away from an activity saying "Wow that felt good." They instead, walked deeper into the lives of the students with each interaction, focusing increasingly on their untapped potential with resolve to seeing it realized.**



**H.D. Woodson High School 1972 - 2008**

**“I have been driven by the unmistakable sense of disconnect that our students experience on a daily basis. They grow up a few miles from Capitol Hill and all its power, but it often feels like the two sides of Washington are worlds apart.” – Susie Kay**

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF 5 FORMED AND MISSION ADOPTED**

A formal board of directors with five representatives was established and Hoop Dreams adopted a formal mission:

**The Hoop Dreams Scholarship Fund (HDSF) works to create relationships, build networks and provide resources that: empower and support inner-city DC public high school students so they can find their best pathways to post-secondary education, career and an enriched life; build bridges of understanding and collaboration between diverse communities in the metropolitan Washington DC region; and promote an on-going commitment to community responsibility and a lasting spirit of service among students, volunteers supporters, and all involved.**

## **OPENING DOORS OF OPPORTUNITIES**

In line with this mission, Susie's efforts to open doors for inner city youth through relationship building across race, economy and geography were formalized and the Hoop Dreams College Prep Mentoring Program was introduced. From the start, she was committed to grounding Hoop Dreams programs in the reality of the students. The program began in the fall of 1998 with 15 high school seniors and mentors who were paired one-to-one. A formal curriculum of day-long workshops was developed and implemented during the academic year over a series of Saturdays. Students and their mentors attended together, listening to inspirational speakers and completing targeted exercises around the college application process, career building and general personal development. Speakers included business, community, education, and political leaders. Parents were invited to attend as well for key sessions.

As part of the program, Susie emphasized that the workshops were only the beginning. Mentors were asked to communicate with their students at least weekly, though most were in touch almost daily. For youth who did not have parents or older siblings familiar with the college application process, mentors filled the role most middle class adults serve to college bound youth in their lives – talking to them about goals, working on college essays, visiting schools and generally helping them to focus their efforts and dreams.

**More than 90% of Hoop Dreams students were the first in their family to go to college and almost all came from single parent households.**

## **MENTORING**

From the first class of mentoring program students, *all* were accepted into accredited colleges. Meanwhile, the mentors each found their lives enriched. They came to appreciate their power to help shape the destiny of another human being. Lasting mutually beneficial friendships were forged between the youth and mentors ranging from recent college graduates to corporate CEO's. Based on the success of this initial effort, 35 students and mentors enrolled for the fall 1999 Mentoring program. Meanwhile, the Hoop Dreams summer basketball tournament continued to grow. In 1998 the event raised \$123,900 for 58 scholarships. In 1999, \$263,500 for 97 scholarships.

Each student connected to Hoop Dreams – whether a scholarship recipient or a mentoring program participant – received personalized attention from Susie and volunteers on her team. In some cases this meant help negotiating with the bursar's office at the college. In others it meant physically mailing a college application (an especially critical help for one student whose mailbox kept getting blown up by local gangs). As the pool of participants – and mentors – grew, the need for a larger infrastructure became evident and Susie began to develop a staff. The first two staff members were hired in 1999. That same year, Hoop Dreams established a formal office at H.D. Woodson High School where students could come for advice, access to the internet for college resource and general support.

In January 2000, Susie Kay was named one of Washingtonian Magazine's "Washingtonians of the Year" further raising the visibility of the organization and drawing in new donors and volunteers.

## **HOOP DREAMS SERVES THREE HIGH SCHOOLS**

By the fall 2000 mentoring session, the number of mentors and high school student participants had grown and the academic year program began with 50 student participants. For the first time, the program was extended to serve not only H.D. Woodson students, but also youth from two additional Washington, DC public high schools east of the Anacostia: Ballou High School and Banneker High School. The expansion to additional sites came at the request of the DC Public School system which had been impressed by the program. The growth was supported by an expanded income base made possible by aggressive outreach by Susie to the corporate and foundation community in Washington.

**Each student's success is a milestone for the city of Washington.**

## **FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

The Hoop Dreams budget grew from \$140,000 in fiscal year 1998 to \$705,000 in 1999 to \$1,063,000 in fiscal year 2000. In 1998 Congressional Receptions were held where scholarship recipients were introduced and were able to give a speech of how their education was making a difference in their lives.

In addition to increased scholarship dollars (\$489,000 awarded to 162 students in 2000), new funding was spent on core program enhancements. Hoop Dreams introduced a formal paid internship program for mentoring program participants with job placements and support in corporate and government offices. Additionally, Susie reached out to the Princeton Review and secured free SAT preparatory training for 20 students. While this service was provided at no charge to the organization, as all Hoop Dreams activities, it entailed significant oversight with staff driving students to their classes and following up to ensure they studied outside of class. By 2001, the Hoop Dreams staff had grown to 7 with personnel in administration and fiscal joining the team, along with an additional program staffer.

**The Hoop Dreams Scholarship Fund is a 501(c) 3 non-profit corporation. Its mission is to raise academic college scholarships for DC public high school students, and to connect these students to the Washington professional business community.**

Even with this growth, the operations remained grounded and sustained an individualized, family-type approach. While the program model employed best practices in youth development, it went beyond that. It was more than a youth program; it was a *human* program that at the same time impacted young people and adult participants, shaping the values and experiences of all involved.

For the fiscal year 2001, the organizational budget grew to \$1,600,000 with \$652,000 in scholarships awarded to 253 students. This year the mentoring program also grew to include 70 participants.

**“In order to engage support, we infused energy and spirit.” – Susie Kay**



## FIRST COLLEGE GRADUATES

The most significant milestone of 2001 was the college graduation of Hoop Dreams first four scholarship recipients. Two of these students returned to the Washington, DC community and enlisted as mentors in the program. Another Hoop Dreams alum joined the Hoop Dreams' Board of Directors which at this point totaled just over 20 members. The organization's infrastructure expanded to include an eighth staff member dedicated to supporting college-level students receiving scholarships. An advisory board was also established with 14 community members who were committed to the organization's mission and fundraising, but who did not have the time to allocate to a full Board-level commitment.

Hoop Dreams began fiscal year 2002 in September of 2001 with a projected budget of approximately \$2,000,000. When the events of September 11, 2001 occurred, however, the entire landscape of social services and funding shifted. During this challenging year, the organization struggled to maintain its core program and to focus on supports for its current and new students. Meanwhile, the technology bubble began to burst and donors that had historically been successful and, in turn, generous to Hoop Dreams, began to face financial difficulties of their own.

Hoop Dreams leadership underwent a strategic planning process to revisit its mission and vision and to determine its priorities for the future. The DC Public School system continued to look to Hoop Dreams for expansion to additional schools. Meanwhile, Susie and her staff were struggling to maintain the individualized approach from the organization's founding with a growing pool of participants. It was important to Susie that staff be able to oversee mentoring relationships and ensure that each partnership was meaningful and mutually beneficial. Further, she wanted to preserve the culture of a familial support system for each student where the young people felt secure that they could come to caring adults within the Hoop Dreams network for help with anything from college selection to concerns about being away from family and friends.

It was determined that rather than expand participation, the focus would be on sustaining a mentoring program participation base of 75-85 students while formalizing supports to alumni. College support efforts were expanded to the then 200+ alumni attending college and staff began developing structured partnerships with colleges attended by large concentration of Hoop Dreams youth. These partnerships facilitated staff involvement around financial aid, enrollment and other admissions issues.

**These young people have broken the cycle of poverty and are bringing their talents, degrees, hearts and experiences to board rooms, classrooms and government offices where they will, in turn, change more lives in the future.**

## **MISSION EXPANDED**

Having reflected upon the organization's mission and goals, staff and board leadership arrived at the following revised mission statement:

**The mission of the Hoop Dreams Scholarship Fund (HDSF) is to break the economic and racial barriers preventing low-income students from achieving a college education or professional success. Hoop Dreams:**

- **Empowers, supports and prepares inner-city DC public high school students to succeed in obtaining post-secondary education, career, and an enriched life through a multi-faceted college preparation program which includes issuance of academic scholarships;**
- **Promotes an on-going commitment to community responsibility and a lasting spirit of service among students, volunteers, and supporters;**
- **Fosters one-on-one connections between youth and adults from extremely different backgrounds through Hoop Dreams' year-round college-prep mentoring program to provide additional resources and support for students as they pursue their academic and career goals;**
- **Builds bridges of understanding and collaboration between diverse communities in the metropolitan Washington DC region to foster a more cohesive community and opportunities for all DC residents; and**
- **Offers an individualized approach to help youth who have been caught in a cycle of poverty find a pathway from welfare dependence towards a promising future.**

**“We inspired and received inspiration; we supported and received support.” – Susie Kay**

## VALUES DRIVEN

The Mission was rooted in the following beliefs and values articulated by organizational leadership:

**Inner-city students from Washington, DC communities east of the Anacostia River are economically and geographically disenfranchised from the city's thriving professional communities.**

- **College access and achievement in higher education are contingent on a combination of factors including: financial resources; involvement of supportive adults familiar with college access; effective individualized college choice and application guidance (bridging the information and college access divide); positive outlook for the future; and competitive test-taking skills.**
- **When *all* Washington residents – lower income and privileged, of all races, ethnicities and socio-economic levels – come together as a unified community, with each individual contributing his or her talents and drawing from available opportunities, the city will be strengthened as a whole.**
- **The Hoop Dreams Scholarship Fund has a critical role to play bridging Washington's diverse communities and linking disenfranchised youth to resources they need to achieve their potential; and an important role also in familiarizing and educating business professionals with the challenges faced by many promising inner city youth and how hard they must work to overcome these barriers.**

With a newly articulated mission and vision and a growing program agenda, Hoop Dreams endeavored to diversify its funding sources and began seeking public funding to help support large-scale organizational infrastructure building and program development. The first application for Federal support was submitted in 2002 with subsequent attempts in 2003, 2004 and 2005. Unfortunately, none of these opportunities materialized. Susie and her staff continued to pursue foundation and private donor renewals and new monetary gifts to support a budget that stood steadily around \$1.5 million. Assessment and refinement of programming continued.

**“I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community and, as I live, it is my privilege - my privilege to do for others whatever I can.” – George Bernard Shaw**

## **SERVICE LEARNING COMPONENT INTRODUCED**

In FY 2003, a service learning component was added to provide youth and mentors with the opportunity to engage in shared activities around community beautification. Starting that year, 20 youth and their mentors participated in an earth day Anacostia River clean up project on Earth Day. In Fiscal Year 2004, a partnership with the Center for Social Leadership enabled Hoop Dreams to offer structured leadership training for 20 mentoring program participants annually. While a nice addition to the core curriculum, as an adjunct program component, it is the one piece that never became fully integrated into the culture of the program. At the same time, staff felt it was worthwhile to be able to offer this resource to the young people in the program.

## **MENTOR LEADERSHIP BOARD**

Also in FY 2004, Hoop Dreams launched a Mentor Leadership Board which organized around strengthening mentor roles and enhancing the program. With many longtime mentors involved in the program, this advisory board grew naturally from the program and the formal structure served to validate the role of committed volunteers.

In fiscal year 2005, at the request of the DC Public School system, Susie finally agreed to extend her program to one additional school and staff began outreach at the Washington Math, Science and Technology Charter School, drawing 10 students into the pool of participants. This same year, the Mentor Leadership Board helped to coordinate a new volunteer-led math and writing support program for mentoring program participants to address an identified need for college readiness in these areas.

## **YEAR ROUND PROGRAM**

The year round program, and the students supported by it, continued to thrive thanks to a dedicated staff of seven among whom were, in addition to Susie, a dynamic former teacher as Program Director, a Coordinator of Special Programs who had been part of the organization since its founding, and two program alumni serving as Program Coordinators. Several staff had come and gone over the years and those who were most effective and who stayed the longest were consistently individuals who shared a deep commitment to the values and vision of the organization. As such, the organization had a “mom and pop” feel with key staff going above and beyond for the organization and its constituents.

## **INTERPERSONAL CONNECTIONS**

At the center of it all remained Susie, personally connected and accessible to students, families and donors. There were attempts to hire a Director of Development to assume more of the fundraising responsibilities, but time and again, it became clear that Susie's dynamic embodiment of the organization, coupled with her longstanding relationships with major donors made her uniquely capable of representing Hoop Dreams in fundraising meetings. She remained closely connected to programming as well with deep roots in the school system and personal relationships with both students and parents they served. Meanwhile, many of the original volunteers remained involved in the program and new ones joined as mentors each year with around a 33% return rate from one year to the next.

The longstanding involvement of volunteers who had been a part of Hoop Dreams in its earliest stages helped to keep the program grounded and allowed for a combination of strategic and intuitive growth. The organization was "mission-driven" and rooted in "values" in the truest sense of these words which have become cliché in the nonprofit and business sectors. The mission and values at the heart of the organization were those that shaped Susie as a person from her childhood and those which she held with the deepest sincerity. Inherent in the program model adopted by Hoop Dreams were personal experiences that led individuals from diverse walks of life to embrace the organization's values as their own too. By all accounts from those who know Susie Kay directly, hers is an unadulterated altruism and her example consistently inspires and empowers others to do more.

## **PRIVATE AND PUBLIC FUNDING**

In 2006 Hoop Dreams was steady in its stride with a solid program model, a consistent base of nearly 200 annual volunteers, 85 students in year-round programs and more than 250 alumni in college still receiving post-secondary supports and scholarships. Private fundraising was challenging in the midst of an economic downturn, but relief came in the form of the organization's first successful Federal fundraising appeal. Hoop Dreams received a \$500,000 grant from the District of Columbia Government which would be renewed for the next two years.

With the security of public funding in hand, Hoop Dreams was now well positioned to expand in the one area that had not been financially possible to date: the development of alumni supports to help college graduates move into the next stage of their lives and to

remain connected formally to the organization. Because of the intimate nature of the program where each student was wholly supported in their college and life pursuits, young people naturally remained in touch with the organization and their peers from the program. When a student graduated college and needed a job, she would call Susie, another staff member and/or her mentor. When a college junior was facing a challenging semester and considered dropping out, he reached out to his Hoop Dreams support system who, of course, offered guidance and resources wherever possible. As the alumni pool grew, these relationships were more and more difficult to manage within the infrastructure of the organization. At last, resources were available to build structures and systems to formally address ongoing needs of program alumni. This involved the development of a website, alumni networking tools and a formal structure of alumni events. As with the overall Hoop Dreams model, these new components were designed to be fueled by relationships. Rather than just hire more staff to address student needs, the goal was to establish mechanisms for student and mentor alumni to connect and contribute to the alumni community's collective needs. With programs thriving, Susie, her staff and board recognized the need for a succession plan and for an increased infrastructure and set out to bring in a Vice President to share in the administrative leadership of the organization.

## **TENTH ANNIVERSARY GALA**

In February 2007, Hoop Dreams held its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala. This special event and its far reaching networking, both before and during the gala, raised over \$400,000 for programs and scholarships. It was an extraordinarily special night attended by 850 caring supporters of Hoop Dreams and was a tremendous celebration of the organization's achievements to date. As all Hoop Dreams events, it served to bring together a diverse group of Washingtonians to celebrate shared goals for our community's youth. By the time of the Gala, hundreds of Hoop Dreams alumni had graduated from college, many returning to the Washington, DC area. The presence of these young adults alongside peers from DC's professional community, many of whom had come from more privileged backgrounds, reinforced a fundamental goal of the organization: to build bridges that promote unity across diversity. Over the two years that followed, the community building event schedule of the organization was expanded to include a number of small fundraising and community building gatherings, and in January 2008, the first annual Hoop Dreams alumni gathering took place.

**“I rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is no brief candle to me; it is a sort of splendid torch which I’ve got a hold of for the moment and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.” – George Bernard Shaw**

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS – LEAVING A LEGACY OF EDUCATION FOR MULTIPLE GENERATIONS

By the spring of 2009, Hoop Dreams:

- **Awarded over 1500 scholarships and renewals to more than 1000 students totaling approximately \$3.5 million.**
- **Placed more than 250 Hoop Dreams students in paid internships.**
- **Engaged more than 400 students in the SAT preparatory training classes provided to them free of charge through HDSF's collaboration with The Princeton Review – with many seeing test score increases that make the difference for their admission to the better colleges of their choice.**
- **Supported more than 200 Hoop Dreams scholarship alums in graduating from college.**
- **Engaged thousands of Washington DC area community members in events that build community and inspire meaningful connections across diversity. These experiences transformed the perspectives of all involved.**

While hundreds of students remained reliant on Hoop Dreams and mentor and volunteer interest was greater than ever, it was increasingly challenging to raise sufficient funds to sustain the needs of current and newly enrolled youth through programmatic supports while also ensuring access to scholarship renewals for continuing students and new high school graduates. Forced to make cutbacks within the organization as so many nonprofits in this environment, the decision was made to cancel the summer's 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament. This was a difficult decision. The Tournament was, for many, at the core of the organization. While it required significant human and financial resources, the Tournament was extremely powerful at building community, reinvigorating volunteers, staff and students and galvanizing year-round supporters. Yet for many years, the Tournament was operating as a community-building event rather than a fundraiser with expenses exceeding direct sponsorships. Despite its residual value, the Tournament was, thus, the obvious choice from a business perspective, when Hoop Dreams' leadership was faced with making budget cuts. The organization was at a crossroads and the choice to cut the tournament was a pivotal one for the organization and a first step in accepting that it was time to close the organization's doors.

## **SUSIE KAY'S WORDS OF APPRECIATION AND PASSING THE LEGACY ON**

Susie spent countless hours figuring out how to make sure the transitional period of the dissolution of Hoop Dreams would go smoothly and that every scholarship would be funded. In addition, she continued to raise money for more scholarships until the organization closed its doors in November 2009.

We are very pleased that two outstanding organizations have been named to be the recipients of the assets of Hoop Dreams, and have agreed, in their own unique way, to continue the spirit of Hoop Dreams by establishing funds within their respective organizations.

As suggested by the board of directors of Hoop Dreams Scholarship Fund, DC College Access Program (DC-CAP) will continue granting scholarships through the Hoop Dreams Legacy Fund. DC-CAP will also administer the remaining scholarships, which were originally awarded by Hoop Dreams. United Negro College Fund (UNCF) will establish the Susie Kay Legacy Fund to provide for academic and career support for the very same population that Hoop Dreams served from 1996 to 2009.

To donate to these funds, checks can be sent to the following:

Susie Kay Legacy Fund  
c/o United Negro College Fund  
Paulette Jackson  
Regional Development Director  
8260 Willow Oaks Corporate Drive  
Suite 100B  
Fairfax, VA 22031-8044  
Phone: 703 205 3504  
[paulette.jackson@uncf.org](mailto:paulette.jackson@uncf.org)

Hoop Dreams Legacy Fund  
c/o District of Columbia College Access Program (Dc-Cap)  
LD Ross, Jr.  
Vice President-Programs  
1029 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Suite 400  
Washington, D.C. 20005  
Phone: 202 783 7933  
[ld.ross@dccap.org](mailto:ld.ross@dccap.org)  
[www.dccap.org/support/hoop\\_dreams\\_legacy\\_fund.shtml](http://www.dccap.org/support/hoop_dreams_legacy_fund.shtml)



## **LOOKING BACK – A VISIT WITH SUSIE KAY**

### **SUSIE, “DID YOU REALIZE THE IMPACT YOU WERE MAKING?”**

When asked if Susie realized what she was doing, she replies, “No, I was so immersed and just kept following my heart. “ Susie Kay has very captivating hazel eyes that donors have said they can never say no to. It was in Susie’s depth of vision that she saw inequalities and took action. “The creation of Hoop Dreams was natural and not a big strategic plan but rather from love and faith. It can be difficult to make choices that are bigger than you, so faith is important. A sense of humor is key too. I saw these kids being in the air shooting baskets who are now grounded and have a future.”

Susie recounts that “Hoop Dreams was about relationships, accountability, mentoring, internships, education, SAT Prep, Career Prep and Scholarship Funding. The sum of all these parts equaled students doing well in college, in their communities and in the future. College was the deliverable. The key for these students is they accomplished these things with help, but in their own style. We empowered each and every student and showed them the best pathways to college, a secure life, and a legacy to pass down to future generations. On the pathways that led me were: the students, politicians, teachers, caring individuals and businesses.

**“I saw so many wonderful students who deserved the same shot at a future that everyone in life deserves” – Susie Kay**



Looking back, Susie continues, “We concentrated on key issues and did not dilute the programs.” Susie Kay describes the success of Hoop Dream’s program:

### **HOOP DREAMS’ FIVE PROGRAMS OF SUCCESS**

- 1. Mentoring:** Unlike traditional mentorship, HDSF's effort benefitted both student and adult. At the beginning of each school year HDSF paired about 80 teenagers with college-educated mentors. These adults helped guide them through the sometimes overwhelming college application process. While the students gained a number of tangible benefits from having a mentor, often the adult volunteers found their lives enriched as a result of their relationship with an HDSF student.
- 2. Standardized Test Preparation:** Through HDSF’s partnership with The Princeton Review, each year a number of students enrolled in our Empowerment Program and were selected to attend a six week SAT preparation course donated by The Princeton Review. HDSF students who had completed the program typically improved their overall SAT scores. For many of our students scoring higher on their SAT exam directly impacted which colleges and universities they were accepted to.
- 3. Career Preparation:** HDSF helped high school students and alumni develop resumes and search for and apply to internships and job opportunities. HDSF also conducted mock interviews to help students become comfortable with the job application process. Students were also connected with adults working in various professions. These volunteers were able to answer questions and offered advice to students.
- 4. Academic Scholarships:** Each year HDSF awarded academic scholarships to graduating high school seniors and alumni who were currently enrolled in college. The amount of each academic scholarship awarded varied, based on individual need. The average award, however, was around \$1,896. Students used their HDSF academic scholarships in addition to other outside financial aid, to help pay for their education. Since 1996 HDSF has awarded an average of 138 new and renewal scholarships per year. Scholars from the 2007-2009 graduating class were enrolled at 40 different colleges and universities across the country.

- 5. Alumni Network:** Each school year HDSF enrolled about 80 new seniors from Washington, D.C. public schools in the Empowerment Program. After graduating from high school these students became official alumni. HDSF alumni ranged in ages from 17 to 30 and were employed in various career fields. HDSF alumni were always connected to HDSF and its vast network that included fellow alumni, adult volunteers, corporate sponsors and community leaders. Today, HDSF alumni continue to serve as ambassadors and offer living proof of Hoop Dream’s core mission: to create and foster personal relationships between students from Washington, D.C. public schools and working professionals from around the region.

Susie explains, “There was no magic formula and the beauty in it was that we did it our way to directly meet the needs on those pathways in an ever-changing climate.” Though there was no magic formula, the success of Hoop Dreams could be seen as:

**Sum of the Parts = Continuing Deliverables**

**Sum of the Parts:**

**Relationships + Accountability + Mentoring + SAT Prep + Scholarship + Career Prep+ Internships + Alumni Giving Back**

**Continuing Deliverables:**

**Pathways to College and Professional Life + College Education + Place in the Community + Bright Future for the Students +  
Balanced Life that will Impact Future Generations + Enriching Other’s Lives**

Susie, emphasizes, “The totality of all these resources was a rewarding human experience. We were in it for the long game and there was never a period at the end of the sentence. We dealt with complex issues and kept always believing that people are inherently good. I found myself crossing into others lives and finding a common ground. I remember how fearless and driven I was by the love for my students. I seemed to grasp the complexities of issues well and felt comfortable in both worlds and even in some of the grey areas.”

## **CHALLENGES FOR SUSIE KAY ALONG THE WAY**

“The biggest challenge for me in working with new staff and the board of directors was keeping them informed of the big picture. Building relationships and day to day problems of students and family issues of course were vital also. It was important to treat everyone equally and first class. Another challenge was that since we were so successful, people thought it was so easy. It was not. I had a sense of running a business but also nurturing individuals within that operation. Being the founder, there was so much on my shoulders. There was no peace of mind because of so many external and internal issues” recounts Susie. “The complexity of the human band width was evident every step of the way,” Susie recalls. She notes that her meaningful relationships with people involved in all aspects of the work was both the most enriching and the most challenging aspect of her experience with Hoop Dreams. The organizational model was less tied to a checklist to move students into college and successful futures than it was to addressing any challenges and opportunities life might present as they came up. The job description for each HDSF staff member as well as each volunteer and even students, included many unknowns. Just as each person involved was seen as having infinite potential for good and success, each was also seen as a human being with complex needs and, of course, all too human imperfections. Integrating this human aspect with a business model for programs and services was difficult, yet critically important to the Hoop Dreams culture and ultimately to our success.

## **CLEAR COMMUNICATION**

“Clear communication was definitely a part of the big picture and making sure we were all going in the same direction and faithful to the mission. At the end of the day there was a significant weight on my shoulders to bring in resources and not to make commitments we couldn’t keep. We had to mean what we say, say what we mean, tying and gluing together the totality of it all. I had to be acutely aware of the most minor details. Communicating trust also was an important factor. We all had trust for the students, staff, and each other” Susie says with emotion.

**"Every generation inherits a world it never made, and as it does so,  
it automatically becomes the trustee for those who come after." - Robert F. Kennedy**

## **BIGGEST STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

Susie enthusiastically reflects that, “Hoop Dreams was never a job; it was my life. The biggest strength of Hoop Dreams was bringing people together. That included our deeply invested board of directors (with a dedicated Board Chair, Frank Ross, who served the organization for the significant portion of its history), volunteers, the DC school community, the media, politicians, the business community, other not-for-profits, guidance counselors, teachers, students, social workers, and other individuals with a passion to help others. We kept that spirit going and continued to bring people together. We inspired and received inspiration; we supported and received support. Susie remembers longtime Hoop Dreams consultant, Richard Kamenitzer saying that “Hoop Dreams is like a corner restaurant and a vital part of the community that nourished our students and stakeholders.” Opportunities were everywhere, with Susie humbly sharing that, “Opportunities began early on. It was a confluence of circumstances that formed Hoop Dreams and its components of education and scholarship. I have seen the documentary “Hoop Dreams.” I had worked on Capitol Hill. I was a teacher at Woodson High in District 7. I saw the opportunities that could bring people together to accomplish so much.”

## **SPECIAL MOMENTS – THAT FIRST DAY**

With tears in her eyes, Susie thoughtfully reminisces, “That first day was so pure when I realized the vision of what was to become Hoop Dreams. Right around this time, my father who was a Captain in the Navy, passed away. This was a life changing event for me as I had lost the person I loved the most in the whole world. I put 10,000 percent of my energy into my students and forming what was to become Hoop Dreams. That time seemed to honor everything my Dad was in his life. I was inspired by the students I was teaching in American Government. During this time I had my first interview and had a chance to articulate the vision that was forming. EDS heard the interview and became Hoop Dream’s first sponsor, contributing the first \$10,000. So now we had \$10,000 and 10,000 percent of my energy and things began to take place. The first thing I did was to create a support system for my students including a student named Theo Brannum who would go on to become Hoop Dreams Program Director.

**In January 2000, Susie Kay was named one of Washingtonian Magazine’s “Washingtonians of the Year” further raising the visibility of the organization and drawing in new donors and volunteers.**

## THEO BRANNUM - MEMORABLE DAYS

“My most memorable days were those high school days. We spent our time studying and did not have to be politically correct. Miss Kay invited speakers to our class, like Eleanor Holmes Norton and this along with educational opportunities made us feel that we were part of something, something special. People going to college and college graduates became our role models.

The Horowitz article was a transformation article that introduced Miss Kay into the public spotlight. Miss Kay was always the same Miss Kay and still is; no matter what obstacles were in her way or how popular she was, she put the students first. I was always inspired by Miss Kay. I was guided and mentored throughout my youth and the board members of Hoop Dreams were helpful. I remember Dimitri Diavatis, a Hoop Dreams Board Member, saying: ‘always bring your resume at all times when you go for an interview even if they already have it.’ Little did I know then, that I would later be in a reverse role telling the students at Hoop Dreams that same information.

Another strength was that we were blessed with institutional knowledge and we had a wonderful understanding of our scholarship recipients, teachers and volunteers. We always stayed connected. We were all thankful for the successes and appreciative of every one. The mission was about creating relationships and breaking stereotypes. We had a sense of history to build on.

The opportunities for me personally started when I was in high school, became a Hoop Dreams Scholarship recipient, went to college, graduated, and became a staff member at Hoop Dreams, ultimately becoming Program Director. We saw it all. There were moments in time when some families could not even afford the application fee for college.

It is rewarding to meet people and hear their successful stories. Most of the secret to success was the authenticity of Hoop Dreams and caring about the students. They were always motivated to step up and they knew we were all on the same path.”



**AT THE END OF THE DAY - Many Thanks To the People We Met On the Path Each Step of the Way**



## **BOARD MEMBERS OF HOOP DREAMS SCHOLARSHIP FUND OVER THE YEARS**

Albert, Ed

Biggers, Morris

Boyd, Steve

Brockington, Donella

Chavous, Kevin

Clark, Kathy

Cohen, Dan

Davis, Susan

Diavatis, Demetri

Duffey, Jim

Dvoranchik, Bill

Etemad, Kathy

Farnsworth, Peter

Gallagher, Curt

Greene, Christopher

Hayes, Beth

Hines, Michael

Hughs, Shannon

Jackson, Donald

Jarvis, Ernie

Jenkins, Ernest

Kay, Susie

Levenson, Bruce

Lynn, Jimmy

Mooradian, Susan

Newstrom, George

O'Neill, Michael

Richardson, John

Rooker, Lamont

Ross, Frank (Board Chair 1999-2009)

Ruffin, David

Sachs, Jerry (Board Chair: 1998-1999)

Schain, Devin

Silverman, Dori

Singh, Paul

Stolkey, Dennis

Symonds, Curtis

Tanner, Jim

Ward, Larry

Weymouth, T. Clark

Williams, Gary T.



## **ABOUT THE ARTIST**

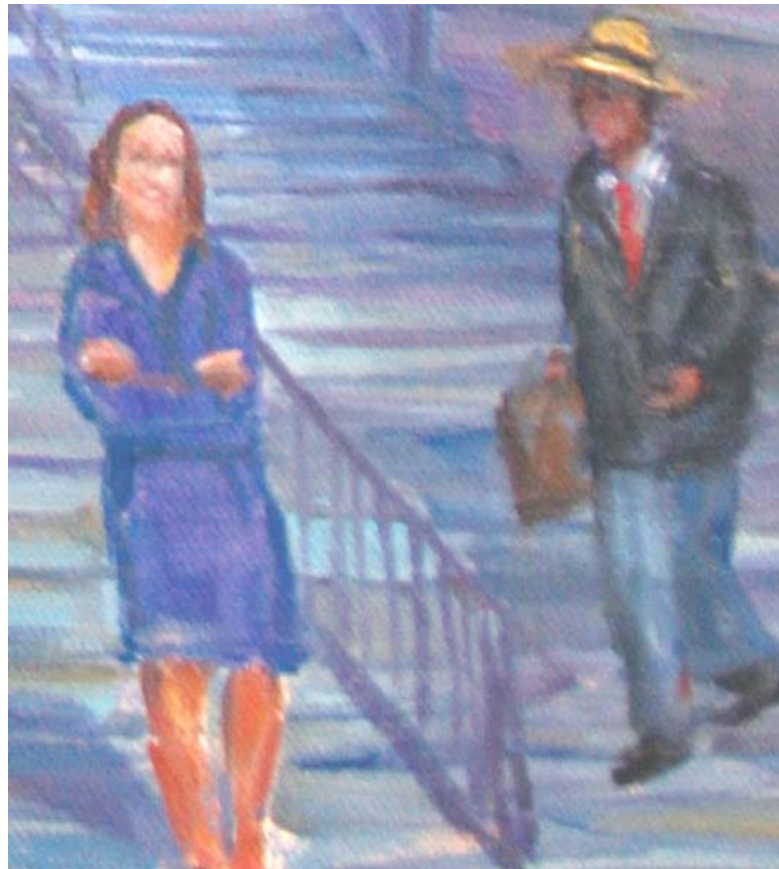
Palmer Smith resides in Broad Run, Virginia.

He is best known for his paintings of historic sites in Warrenton and Clifton, Virginia.

His artwork consists of landscapes, historic buildings, town scenes, and portraits.

He is an artist among the people and he literally works on the streets with his easel set up as he paints outdoors.

**“The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.” – Eleanor Roosevelt**



**As the organization closes its doors, there are 1000 student alumni and an equal number of mentors and volunteers, transformed forever by their experiences with Hoop Dreams. They will continue the spirit of Hoop Dreams in their own special ways.**

## SUSIE KAY'S BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

- Kay taught 12th grade American Government at H.D. Woodson High School, an inner-city public school, east of the Anacostia River, in the District's Ward 7.
- Kay, who worked on Capitol Hill prior to becoming a teacher, routinely brought elected officials, business leaders and Capitol Hill staff members to speak to her students.
- She authored the curriculum guide for STAR- Students Talk About Race - a resource guide used to properly educate teachers on the delicate subject of racial reconciliation and ways to break down racial barriers. The curriculum, designed for the organization People for the American Way, has been used to educate teachers in high schools across the nation.
- Before deciding to pursue a teaching career Kay worked for Claudine Schneider, a former Member of Congress from Rhode Island.
- She also volunteered for a number of local and national Democratic campaigns. Kay has appeared on local and national television (CNN,C-SPAN) and radio outlets, speaking on a wide range of issues, from education to urban politics to socio-economic disparities.
- The President's Commission on Race honored Kay in 1999 for her work to further racial reconciliation. Kay's testimonial on the adverse impact of decreasing the Federal budget for education was delivered by the late Senator Paul Wellstone (D-MN) on the Senate floor and was printed in the Congressional Record on March 12, 1996.
- Kay was honored with the Myrtle Wreath award for education by Hadassah and was selected as one of the Washingtonians of the Year for 2000 by Washingtonian Magazine.

- In 2002, Coca-Cola selected Kay to be a bearer of the Olympic Torch as it passed through Washington, D.C. on its journey to Utah for the Salt Lake City 2002 Winter Olympics.
- In 2002, Kay was presented with the Martin Luther King Jr., Service Award by the United Planning Organization.
- In 2003, Kay was recognized by Soroptomist International as a 2003 Woman of Distinction in the area of Education.
- She is a graduating member of the 2002-2003 class of Leadership Washington and a member of the Washington, DC Non Profit Roundtable.
- American University awarded her their Distinguished Alumni of 2003 Award and the Jewish Social Service Agency of Greater Washington recognized her with the Lehrman-Pikser Award.
- In 2004, she served as the keynote speaker for the U.S. Department of Education's Electronic Access Conferences, and was recognized as the "Community Activist of the Decade" by the Urban Independent Music Awards and the Citizen of the Year by Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. Washington, DC Chapters.
- In the Fall of 2005, Hoop Dreams, led by Susie Kay, was recognized by the DC Chamber of Commerce with the Community Service of the Year Award.
- The City Council of The District of Columbia, on Tuesday, July 14, 2009, formally recognized the 13 years of hard work, and thousands of relationships that have been formed as a result of Hoop Dreams Scholarship Fund and its Founder and President Susie Kay. Speaking on behalf of the City Council, Chairman Vincent Gray talked about how the

vision of a former Washington, D.C. public high school teacher helped 1,000 students pursue their dreams of attending college."What Susie Kay has done for our city is absolutely unmatched. I am delighted, on behalf of the DC Council, to honor you," said Gray during the ceremony, which was held inside the Council's chambers.

- The daughter of a Navy captain and a caring Italian mother, Kay grew up in Newport, Rhode Island and graduated from American University in Washington, D.C.

**Susie Kay's Dream lives on in the hearts and lives of people everywhere.**