

# 10 QUESTIONS with **PEOPLE WHO IMPACT** DOOR COUNTY

Bret N. Bicoy is president and CEO of the Door County Community Foundation, Inc. Since he assumed the position in 2008, the foundation and its family of charitable funds have received contributions of \$12 million and distributed \$5 million to charity, and its total assets have grown from less than \$4 million to nearly \$15 million. Bicoy also recently completed a term as president of the Rotary Club of Sturgeon Bay.



## BRET N. BICOY

Bret Bicoy stands outside the Door County Community Foundation office on Louisiana Street in Sturgeon Bay. **Tina M. Gohr/Door County Advocate**

**AGE ON AUG. 1, 2015:** 45

**FAMILY:** Wife, Cari ; children, Alyssa, David, Bret Jr., Kekoa, Nalani, and Malia

**CITY OF RESIDENCE:**  
Sturgeon Bay



## 1 WHAT DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION DO?

In a legal sense, the Door County Community Foundation is a tax-exempt, nonprofit, publicly supported philanthropic corporation with the long-term goal of building permanent, named funds for the broad-based public benefit of Door County. For many of our donors, the foundation allows them to establish a charitable fund without incurring the costs of starting and administering a private foundation.

But in practical terms, we build community. With the support of generous people in Door County, we bring charities, businesses, government and people together to accomplish goals none of us could ever achieve on our own.

There is very little we do by ourselves at the Community Foundation. Instead, we seek out leaders who care very deeply about our Peninsula. We provide them the infrastructure and support they need to call together a community of like-minded people and accomplish wonderful things for Door County.

We believe in the power of the spirit of community. I don't necessarily mean "spirit" in a religious sense, although some might feel it that way. I mean the spirit that comes from the strength of a fellowship of people that can look beyond what separates them and find a way to unite and serve something larger than themselves.

## 2 HOW MANY PEOPLE WORK FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION?

The foundation outsources its accounting and investment functions to minimize our administrative costs. However, we maintain a tiny staff of four in our Sturgeon Bay office. Of course, literally hundreds of more people volunteer their time through the many projects that operate under the umbrella of the Community Foundation.

## 3 WHAT MAKES YOUR ORGANIZATION SPECIAL IN DOOR COUNTY?

There's nothing particularly special about the foundation. We're just a conduit – one of our board members likes to say we're a "tool" – for people who care deeply about Door County. What's truly special is when the people of our county come together as one through the Community Foundation and work toward a goal that none of us could realize on our own.

## 4 WHAT ONE PIECE OF ADVICE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SHARE WITH OTHERS?

The author Peter Block wrote that our idealism is in retreat. To be called an "idealist" has become an accusation that you are unable or unwilling to see the world as it really is. As our idealism fades, we lose our capacity to dream.

We need more people with an enduring idealism, and an abiding faith, that our world can be brighter and better if we gather together and work with one another in a spirit of community.

## 5 WHAT BOOKS WOULD YOU RECOMMEND?

"The Road to Character" by David Brooks; "The Answer to How is Yes" by Peter Block; "Hope Unraveled: The People's Retreat and Our Way Back" by Richard Harwood; "Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community" by Robert Putnam; "Sturgeon Bay: The Secret Treasures of Door County" by Tom Jordan.

## 6 IF YOU WEREN'T DOING WHAT YOU'RE DOING NOW, WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Rev. Michael Brecke, the former pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Juddville who retired home to Kansas last year, once

wrote me a note that said, "Bret, if you hadn't discovered lust, you'd have made one hell of a priest." I'm not sure if he's right, but I've often said I want to be like Michael when I grow up.

## 7 WHAT IS THE NICEST THING ANYONE HAS EVER DONE FOR YOU?

I've experienced so much generosity in my life that it's impossible to single out just one act of kindness. I am truly blessed.

## 8 WHAT ONE PLACE IN DOOR COUNTY DO YOU LOVE OR STANDS OUT FOR YOU?

There are so many terrific places in Door County from which to choose. If I had to pick just one place to be, it would be sitting around my big fire pit in the backyard, laughing and talking with our family and friends. We've never had as wonderful a group of friends as we've made here in Door County.

## 9 WHAT IS YOUR "AT-BAT" OR RING ENTRANCE SONG?

"Fate Yanagi" by Rap Reiplinger. People from my home state of Hawaii would laugh at that one. If you want a loud, get-the-crowd-rocking entrance song that is appropriate for me, then let me suggest Chuck D's "Don't Believe the Hype."

## 10 WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST GUILTY PLEASURE?

As I've entered middle age, I find that don't really have any guilty pleasures left. All my pleasures tend to be right out there in the open for the whole world to see.