

Marla Tofle is the innovative grantmaker whose unique combination of vision, principle, and personal commitment is critical to effecting real change in our community. Marla, like Mr. Scrivner, uses her intelligence and creativity to shape the Foundation's grantmaking in courageous—and risky—areas.

Marla joined NVCF in 2005, and for many years was the sole grantmaking staff. With Terence, Marla has grown the Foundation's grantmaking from entirely donor-directed, to responsive and impactful. Over the years, Marla has worked alongside nonprofit grantees to establish multiple innovative programs that have filled gaps, like: emergency assistance to flood victims; and, legal services to help residents save their homes from foreclosure.

However, Ms. Tofle is truly deserving of this honor for her work in spearheading the grantmaking of NVCF's One Napa Valley Initiative (ONVI). Three years ago, Napa County was quickly becoming a place that was not welcoming, sometimes downright hostile, to the estimated 11,000 immigrants who call our community home, and residents of Napa became US citizens at a lower rate than people in the rest of the state.

Marla, Terence and NVCF's Board of Directors recognized that NVCF could take action, and create change. The work of ONVI is shaped by Marla's vision—one of an inclusive and welcoming community for all. Marla turned her vision into action, and in just three months, Marla identified the types of services that would be needed to help more people become citizens and active in civic life, brought nonprofits together, and established a plan.

It's working; since last July, ONVI has helped almost 400 people with legal naturalization services, approximately 100 have submitted applications to become US Citizens; and nearly two dozen have actually become US Citizens. Prior to this work, Napa County saw only a handful of residents naturalize in a year's time.

This work has not been easy, and has taken immense creativity. Our semi-rural community often fears rapid change, and the nonprofit community is cautious when new agencies come to town. Over the last year, Marla has been patient and tenacious in working with the grantees every step of the way to build a sustainable collaborative that would be an asset to our community for years to come.

She had the foresight to understand that without taking the proper steps to build the infrastructure—all while being mindful of the funder's role in the process—long-term impact would not be achieved.

Marla's passion for the work (she even volunteers at the citizenship workshops on days off) is why this work is making a real difference in our community. Despite the challenges that have occurred, like negative press or issues between grantees, Marla has never stopped championing for better lives for the residents of Napa County.