ALEXANDRIA, VA—Patty Stonesifer started her career at Microsoft after being drawn to technology’s power to, as she says, “increase access to knowledge for all.” Throughout her career as the founding CEO of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Chair of the White House Council for Community Solutions, and now the President and CEO of Martha’s Table, Patty has remained committed to fostering social justice by reducing barriers to needs such as healthy food and education for individuals struggling to break the cycle of poverty.

Speaking to nearly 300 nonprofit, corporate and local government leaders at ACT for Alexandria’s IMPACT: Innovation + Philanthropy Forum, Patty described the importance of matching deep passion and care about the issues affecting communities with a system of change that is tied to data and evaluation.

“Needle moving change,” Patty advised, “happens though multi-sector collaboration on a common goal, combined with rigorous data and evaluation, a backbone organization and leaders who are at the table and who will not get up until an effective system for change has been developed.”

Patty’s model for this cross-sector approach to widespread change includes as she puts it, “looking at the issues from the ground level as well as from the top, at the 20,000 foot perspective.” For individuals leading systemic change efforts, Patty recommended her own daily goal-setting technique borrowed from DC nonprofit The Management Center: TWBSI, or Today Would Be Successful If. Patty uses this acronym to set goals for what she wants to accomplish by the end of each day, both at the ground level and on higher, broader levels.

This focus on the outcomes of each activity is what Patty suggests is the key to driving social justice movements. Patty advises, “Looking at the last mile, or the goals for your programs, and then determining the activities that will push you towards that end outcome.” It’s critical, Patty says, “for all of the players to agree on that last mile or end goal.”

IMPACT attendees put Patty’s advice on multi-sector collaboration into action through attending subsequent breakout sessions on collaborating with funders, the media, and developing leadership skills. The Forum concluded with an information session on ACT’s 2015 capacity building grants,
which provide nonprofits up to $15,000 to improve their operations, provide leadership development and enhance services. The window for submitting Letters of Inquiry for the 2015 grant cycle opened on October 1 and will close on October 23. To date, ACT has given almost $700,000 in capacity building grants which have been used for projects such as developing strategic plans, creating communications plans and implementing evaluations to assess effectiveness of programs. To learn more, please visit: www.actforalexandria.org.

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**About ACT for Alexandria**

Launched in 2004, ACT for Alexandria (ACT) is a community foundation that seeks to raise the level and effectiveness of community engagement and giving for the benefit of all Alexandria. ACT operates a number of initiatives, including ACTion Alexandria, Spring2ACTion, LEAD, and IMPACT: Innovation+Philanthropy. For more information about ACT and how you can support the pressing needs of the nonprofit community in Alexandria, contact ACT at 703-739-7778 or visit www.actforalexandria.org.