

Here's how Gritty is like the best Delco nonprofits

Frances Sheehan of The Foundation for Delaware County believes it makes complete sense that Gritty's backstory has him coming from Delco. The mascot's can-do, get-the-job-done attitude exemplifies the nonprofits the foundation funds, she says.



By [Frances Sheehan](#) / GUEST



(Photo by J. Fusco for VISIT PHILADELPHIA)



This story is part of "[The 'Burbs](#)" month of the [Generocity Editorial Calendar](#).

This is a guest post by Frances Sheehan, president of The Foundation for Delaware County.

Did you hear that the Flyers mascot Gritty is the Philly Phanatic's cousin from Delaware County?

That made complete sense to those of us living and working here, including everyone at [The Foundation for Delaware County](#). Since the foundation was created two years ago, we've had the chance to see how nonprofits in Delco are changing the face of service delivery in Philly's diverse "collar county" with a gritty, can-do, on-the-ground, get-the-job-done focus on mission first.

Partly because of the well-regarded public health programs we run like **Healthy Start** and **Nurse-Family Partnership**, and because we live here, we thought that we knew all about the needs in Delaware County. Our grantmaking process this year taught us about many agencies that are working hard to address other important needs and engage their clients and communities.

Just as Gritty appeals to the community and cares about his fans, the best Delco nonprofits solicit their clients' opinions and stories, give front line staff ways to provide meaningful feedback, and make sure that senior leadership and board members have opportunities to engage on the ground.

And as Gritty has gone global, the Delaware County nonprofits having the greatest impact are those that look beyond geographic and program borders to learn about trends in the field and what their counterparts in other communities are doing to improve outcomes. They pay attention to the needs their clients are telling them about and they look to other organizations to establish partnerships — like **CASA Youth Advocates'** effort to build the collaborative **Voice for Delaware County Children**. They know that asking for help is not a sign of weakness but rather a recognition that none of us and no one agency can solve intransigent and systemic social problems alone.

Gritty is different from any mascot who has come along in years and his success sends a clear message that difference is to be embraced. That's exactly what successful Delco nonprofits have done by diversifying their boards of directors and hiring and promoting diverse staff, so they can better address the needs of communities like Upper Darby where the school district's students speak more than 40 different languages.

Just as Gritty is inspiring new enthusiasm for Philly's sports teams across the country, we are inspired to do even more for Delaware County. The 117 funding proposals we received last year have motivated us to show the world how Delaware County nonprofits are changing the face of service delivery in some of our region's most struggling neighborhoods.

If you too care about Delaware County, [join us](#) to see how we're inspiring philanthropy to move Delaware County forward.