

TOP NONPROFIT COMPANY

WASHINGTON  
CEO  
2006 BEST  
COMPANIES  
TO WORK FOR

DAN LAWONT

The Russell Family Foundation has given millions of dollars to help clean up Puget Sound. Executives include (from left) Nancy McKay, environmental sustainability manager; CEO Richard Woo; and Learning Director Henry Izumizaki.

# Insiders Welcome

*Russell Family Foundation  
takes its "Best Company" image  
across the globe*

**YOU** need to be in the inner circle to get your name on this philanthropy's list of potential grantees. That is, if you are interested in funding a local, grassroots development or megaconcepts such as global peace and security, or bridging the gap between Islam and the West.

If you're simply interested in an environmental grant to help save Puget Sound, outsiders are OK.

Either way, the results can be substantial. The Russell Family Foundation (TRFF), with head offices in an airy, light-filled "green" building in Gig Harbor that represents its commitment to the environment, made nearly \$12 million in grants during 2004, the most recent year for which financial data are available. That is up 167 percent in one year.

"The icon of the region is Puget Sound itself," says CEO Richard Woo. "For a number of years that body had been in decline, for a number of reasons – development, pollutants, certain stewardship practices. We made a grant because we felt that could become a catalyst, raise the profile of Puget Sound to this region. For us, that was taking a stand."

The result is an alliance of three well-known organizations to launch a massive campaign to save the shorelines of the Sound. The Shoreline Alliance's campaign, initially comprised of People for Puget Sound, The Nature Conservancy and The Trust for Public Land, started in March with a \$3 million grant from TRFF. It is the starting point for an \$80 million, three-year program which, in itself, is only designed to "lay the groundwork for what will ultimately be a 10-year, multi-billion-dollar campaign, putting the effort to save the sound on a par with other large-scale estuarine restoration projects, such as those currently under way in the Chesapeake Bay and the Everglades," the group says.

Woo, who came to TRFF in 2000 and was the former executive director of the Levi Strauss Foundation in San Francisco, points to the \$42 million, public/private partnership announced at the end of 2005 by Gov. Christine Gregoire to "restore and

protect Puget Sound" as the type of resource that could be made available to fund the ambitious project.

The alliance is the result of TRFF's regional focus on environmental sustainability – one of its three focuses, but the only one open to accepting applications.

TRFF has two other areas where it makes grants: local and global. The local grants, which go to grassroots organizations, are made through Jane's Fund, which was set up to honor foundation co-founder Jane T.

"Live your LIFE IN PEACE, not pieces."

— Richard Woo, CEO of The Russell Family Foundation

Russell. Grants made to advance global peace and security are made through the George F. Russell Jr. Fund, which is focused on Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union and Asia Pacific.

The foundation was set up using proceeds from the 1999 sale of Tacoma's Frank Russell Co., now Russell Investment Group, to Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Co. Frank Russell Co., itself a "Best Company to Work For" in past years, was managed for nearly four decades by George and Jane Russell, who had purchased a small brokerage and mutual fund business started in 1936 by George's grandfather, building it into a world-scale company.

This year marks TRFF's first time as the leader in the nonprofit/governmental category of *Washington CEO's* 2006 Best Companies to Work For survey.

As an example of grants made by Jane's Fund, Woo points to the program's two-year fellowship program, which helps a select group of grassroots leaders develop

leadership skills and provides mutual support for their projects.

The latest group of 11 fellows, up from six in the 2004-2006 class, was announced in May and includes many involved in various Pierce County grassroots projects. Often those efforts involve children.

One fellow is a rural Pierce County resident, Kelly Maynard, who started a neighborhood watch program five years ago to eradicate methamphetamine by reducing access to the over-the-counter drugs used to make it.

"She is still doing it, and we are funding her as one of our grassroots fellows to do her work," explains Woo. While anti-meth efforts have been applauded by some in the community, they have been opposed by some pharmaceutical companies, he notes.

TRFF's global program is a bit more esoteric. A lot of it is focused on projects George Russell himself is working on using his business contacts in Eastern Europe. "He has been doing this for a number of years and, when you think about it, some of the major change in peace and security in the last 10 to 15 years has been in the former Soviet Union," Woo explains.

Russell doesn't stop there, also aiming his fund's efforts, as well as his personal philanthropy, at issues such as tracking down and controlling nuclear weapons, controlling toxic nuclear waste, detoxifying toxic waste and "trying to bridge the gap between Islam Muslims and the West," according to Woo. "He is concerned that if those conflicts and tensions aren't addressed, we are on our way to a 100-year war," he adds.

With all of these major goals and projects under way, one might expect TRFF to be widely recognized. But the foundation intentionally keeps a low profile. "The family believes one's actions should speak louder than their words," Woo adds. "It is not a high priority for us to be recognized in the newspaper or to have our name at the top of a press release. We care about the work," he says.

— Scott Williams