

WHERE ART MEETS OPPORTUNITY

Under Tammy Salvadore’s leadership, the Reliance Matrix Foundation has expanded access to transformative educational programs in the arts.

In her nearly 30 years as executive director of Reliance Matrix Foundation, Tammy (McAlindin) Salvadore ’85 VSB has led initiatives that have touched the lives of more than 50,000 underserved students in and around Philadelphia.

The foundation partners with cultural institutions and community organizations throughout Greater Philadelphia to support arts and STEM education, mentoring, and career-focused programs for students in grades 5 through 12. “We are engaging students in innovative, immersive programming that builds confidence, sparks creativity and introduces them to career opportunities,” Salvadore explains.

Programs include after-school programming, a six-week intensive summer film program, and the Philadelphia Zoo’s West Philly Zoo Scholars Program, which involves regular workshops, core science classes and hands-on animal care. “These programs are not easy—they require commitment, discipline and an openness to learn and collaborate,” Salvadore says.

From Finance to Fine Arts

Since 1996, the Reliance Matrix Foundation (formerly the Delphi Project Foundation) has invested more than \$15 million to support thousands of life-changing opportunities at renowned cultural institutions, in the classroom, after school and during the summer.

“Exposure to the arts has the power to challenge the mind, inspire the soul, promote cultural expression and strengthen our community,” Salvadore says.

“I am grateful to work for a company where corporate social responsibility is core to its mission.” The foundation is one outreach arm of Reliance Matrix, a leader in financial protection, employee benefits and absence solutions and a member of the global Tokio Marine Group.

“We believe in a culture of ‘Good Company,’ which includes looking beyond profit to nourish the communities in which we work and live,” says Chris Fazzini, president of Reliance Matrix. “Tammy built our foundation into a living model of how to cultivate strong communities by educating and inspiring young people.”

Salvadore joined the company in 1989, just a few years after graduating with a degree in Finance from Villanova. Initially, she worked in finance and investor relations. But when Reliance was exploring more formal ways to give back to the community, Salvadore took the lead in getting the foundation set up from a finance perspective—and embraced the invitation to serve as its executive director.

“That challenge of developing something from the ground up was very appealing,” she says. “This foundation awakened a passion for the arts in me because I’ve seen the benefits of what it can do.”

Under Salvadore’s leadership, the foundation continues to evolve and expand. It started with a \$150,000 budget, supporting programs at three schools. Over three decades, it has grown to serve students representing 120 schools and community organizations.

The foundation is recognized as an Educational Improvement Organization by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development. For more than 25 years, it has maintained core partnerships with three world-renowned cultural institutions: the Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia Ballet and Philadelphia Zoo. To date, it has collaborated with 18 community partners, including the Franklin Institute, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Taller Puertorriqueño, the Mann Center and Project HOME.

A Leader Committed to Learning

In 2014, Salvadore enrolled in the two-year intensive training program to become a Philadelphia Museum of Art guide. To expand her knowledge of the arts, she attended weekly training sessions with a cohort of 20 other trainees from various backgrounds—including a Philosophy professor from Villanova. “It was one of the most challenging yet rewarding experiences, with the most supportive colleagues,” she says.

Salvadore still leads tours about twice a month and often joins students on their tours. With about 220,000 works of art in the permanent collection, there are always new discoveries. “Students will point out something in a work of art that I might have looked at 50 times and never noticed before,” she says. “I learn something new every time.”

“What stays with me about Villanova is the sense of community and the power of learning in community,” Salvadore says. “You can’t lead alone. You need to be able to learn and work in collaboration with others and embrace new ideas—that started for me at the Villanova School of Business.”



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