



Cynthia Brown
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When Cynthia Brown describes her life, she says, “I’m always where I’m supposed to be.” Fortunately, she was out strolling in Durham, North Carolina, one October morning nearly a decade ago, when she bumped into a neighbor working with The Conservation Fund. Several conversations later, Brown found herself delivering a keynote talk at the first Grassroots Convening, a statewide gathering of community, government, business and environmental leaders hosted by our Resourceful Communities Program (RCP).

We recently held our 14th Grassroots Convening. Brown was again a central figure, but this time, she was a leader in organizing the event. For nearly a decade, Brown has become an increasingly important member of RCP, which helps North Carolina’s rural communities address persistent poverty by tapping natural resources to create jobs and strengthen economies. First working as a consultant and now as a part-time staff member, Brown helps administer RCP’s small-grants program and provides training and technical assistance for the community groups that are our grassroots partners.

Brown has devoted her career to helping people build capacity to transform communities, from serving as a city council member to competing in a Democratic primary for a U.S. Senate seat. Today, with RCP, she continues this community legacy by advising partners like Asheville GO, which trains “disconnected” young adults for green collar jobs, and the Spaulding-Monroe Alumni Association, which is renovating a historic African-American school as a community center in rural Bladen County. Brown is helping these community organizations develop strategic plans and assess progress, offering solutions and new opportunities as the organizations grow.

As she puts it: “One reason I love working at the Fund is that our success is not just measured by the number of acres conserved, but also by the ways we empower people in the community to have control over their own lives.”