



*Phillip Kilbridge, Coro Fellow in Public Affairs, San Francisco, 1998.*

After completing my undergraduate degree, I was determined to influence change and make a positive impact by pursuing a career in politics. It was while I was working on a political campaign that one of my colleagues first told me about the Coro Fellows Program. My interest was piqued from that moment on. After completing a Masters in Higher Education Administration, I applied to both law school and Coro and was accepted into both programs. While contemplating my options, I reached out to Coro alums to learn more about their experiences. Each person I spoke to, from a Senior Vice Chancellor at UCLA to a Cabinet Secretary for Governor Pete Wilson, not only took the time to meet with me, but each was genuinely excited to tell me about how Coro had shaped their careers. It was those conversations that led me to choose Coro—a decision that would change the course of my career and help me to discover new passions and skills.

When our fellowship year began, I was confident in my skills and abilities. However, when finished, I was shaken to my foundation by what I didn't know. It was a very difficult year of non-stop work and high expectations from the Coro staff and Field Faculty. My Fellows class pushed and supported each other through all of the amazing and challenging times we had as a group. During my time as a Coro Fellow, I learned how to further value other people's opinions, effectively facilitate meetings, and collaborate across sectors.

One of my most meaningful experiences was during my nonprofit placement at the Trauma Foundation. The Executive Director, Andrew McGuire, was a MacArthur "Genius" Fellow. He was also a brilliant field faculty who gave me a new perspective about nonprofits and how they could change the face of a community and influence policy. He demonstrated firsthand how community-based organizations were able to address social issues and inspire people to get involved and volunteer.

Before Coro, working in the nonprofit sector was never an option. But right after completing my fellowship, I founded a consulting group with some of my Coro classmates to help nonprofits by conducting leadership trainings for staff and helping them form strategic plans. Then, at the age of 26, I was hired as the director of Leadership Mid-Peninsula, due in large part to my experience as a Coro Fellow. I have continued to work in a management capacity for community-based organizations over the past nine years in the Bay Area and in Boston, Massachusetts.

Now, as Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity San Francisco, we use many of the tools and lessons I learned at Coro with our organization as we fight to eliminate poverty housing in San Francisco and Marin County—building homes in partnership with families who would otherwise face poverty living conditions. For over seven years I have served as a Field Faculty for eight Coro Fellows, including our current Associate Director, Jim Murray, who was hired after his fellowship. The work that the Fellows have done for our organization has helped advance our organizational goals, initiate new programs and plan for the future.

I continue to stay connected to the network and meet other alumni in almost every aspect of my life. In fact, I married Coro St. Louis alumna, Kelley Karandjeff, and we just had our first baby, Elias Andrew Kilbridge this past May. We hope he will be in the Coro Exploring Leadership Class of 2023.