

A glass sphere sits on a blue liquid surface, creating concentric ripples. The scene is captured in a monochromatic blue color palette. The sphere is positioned on the left side of the frame, and its reflection is visible on the surface below it. The background is a gradient of blue, with the liquid surface showing subtle textures and light reflections.

# Women's Giving Circles: Reflections from the Founders

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## FOREWORD

Stories can be transformative. They evoke the imagination, connect us emotionally, and move us to action. Sondra Shaw-Hardy has contributed the valuable perspective of personal narrative to our understanding of how social movements develop by telling the personal, heartfelt philanthropic journeys of the dynamic women who created the first giving circles of the contemporary women's philanthropy movement. Her experiences as giving circle founder, author, and leader of the giving circle movement provide a unique lens to view the exponential growth of this recent trend in philanthropy.

During her own philanthropic journey, Sondra Shaw-Hardy co-founded the Women's Philanthropy Institute (WPI) with Martha Taylor. WPI, now located at the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, is dedicated to deepening the understanding of women's philanthropy. We are pleased to share these stories which connect heart to head to hands.

Dr. Debra Mesch  
Director  
Women's Philanthropy Institute  
August 2009

## DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my mother, Nedra Beatrice Chase, whose intelligence and sense of justice are astounding. Her interest, knowledge, and achievements have been an inspiration to our entire family. Mother carried on the tradition of writing established by her mother, Dollie Lee Walcutt, a newspaper reporter in the late 1800's. I am pleased to be a bearer of this gene to my children and grandchildren.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Martha Taylor, my dear friend, colleague, and writing partner whose vision of women and philanthropy in 1988 at the University of Wisconsin created a movement. I will be eternally grateful for our partnership, both professional and personal.

To Colleen Willoughby who physically *created* women's giving circles. She has been my mentor, colleague, and friend. Thank you, Colleen, for motivating all of us.

To Jack, who knows each of these wonderful women from their stories and who has supported all of us through this writing process.

And finally, to all the women who have started or become part of women's giving circles. You inspire me. You are making history through your innovative efforts.

# Introduction

This narrative shares the stories of the women founders of giving circles. The majority of the first giving circles were created by women for women members. Though giving circles are now popular among both genders, women have contributed more significantly to the inception and the growth of the giving circle movement.

While researchers now study giving circles, I wanted to make sure the personal stories of the early founders' efforts were recorded, too. I wanted to document their experiences; highlight their accomplishments; and celebrate the excitement, enthusiasm, and energy of their efforts. I hope these stories will motivate others to establish giving circles, to strengthen their current circle, and take their circle to a new level.

I interviewed 18 women founders for this project. They represent a variety of giving circles, differing by mission, organizational structure, location, and membership demographics. The founders and members are diverse in age, religion, race, ethnicity, and income.

Organized chronologically, the interviews document the growth of the giving circle movement as it has expanded across race, culture, geography, and age. Each founder's story is unique and reveals her personal journey into this new philanthropic landscape. Together, the stories reveal the creativity, tenacity, and determination of women who wish to transform their communities.

Here is a snapshot of these narratives: Hali adapted the Korean "geh" into a giving circle; Oprah helped Marsha's idea become a reality; Amy can't help giving away money; Lynn found her African heritage through her circle; Sheila turned a horrible tragedy into a reason to live and help others; Lee discovered she's not afraid to ask women for million dollar gifts; and Julie was committed to helping her friends give away money.

Jane wanted to show young girls it's not "nerdy" to be an engineer or scientist; Buffy's family of strong women gave her courage to try new adventures and focus on women and girls; Colleen raised money for Campfire and mothered giving circles; and Rosie used her personal experiences as a Latina as the basis for her giving circle.

Wendy's banking background helped in founding her circle; Sheila chaired an \$11 million fundraising campaign in Minneapolis in the mid 80's; Courtenay and Ann's friendship became the Alliance that has granted more than \$1.5 million; Deborah Hoffman's mother has always been her inspiration in life; Rebecca read an article in a time of sorrow that was the beginning of her circle; and Deborah McManus' circle fills her Buddha bowl.

I hope these stories inspire you – perhaps encourage you to join an existing giving circle or to start a new one with a few friends or colleagues. A story motivated my journey.

## MY INTRODUCTION TO GIVING CIRCLES

One day early in 1998 I was flying from my home in Traverse City, Michigan to Washington, DC. In the airport, I picked up a copy of *People*<sup>1</sup> with a striking photo of Prince Charles on the cover. That surely must have been the reason I purchased the magazine.

Thumbing through the magazine, I saw a picture of four women in a kitchen throwing their hands up in *celebration* – Colleen Willoughby and her friends were *celebrating* the *creation* of the Washington Women's Fund in Seattle. Little did I know that particular issue would be the beginning of something so incredibly large in my life.

I read about how these remarkable women invited their friends to contribute \$2,500 annually, pool the money, and distribute it via community grants (see Colleen's story on page 11). The idea lingered in my mind. At the time, I was board president of our Women's Resource Center (WRC) in Traverse City. We needed money for our domestic violence programs and our shelter, Helen's House. I thought, "We could do this. We could start a program like the one in Seattle to raise money for the WRC."

I really didn't push the idea. I just talked about the concept to a few people, including a friend in Florida, my stepdaughter who lived downstate, and a couple of friends in town. To my amazement, each said that if I organized something she would join at a \$1,000 annual commitment level. Wow! There wasn't even an ask, just a story. It was the easiest fundraising I'd ever done.

Colleen Willoughby shared four pieces of valuable advice when I called her: start small with people others want to be with, take your time organizing, understand that developing the grantmaking process will take the most time, and encourage everyone to serve on the grantmaking committee. She emphasized the last point—it is vital to help women *connect* to the group and its mission. The intensity of that *connection* is a key indicator of whether they will continue to give.

## STARTING MY GIVING CIRCLE

Soon afterward my friend, Susie Janis, and I talked. We decided to form a giving circle and discussed how to organize

it. We wanted to support the WRC, but also liked the idea of supporting more women and girls throughout the community. We asked questions. For example, how do we recruit members? How do we allocate money? Should we ask for an annual gift or a multi-year pledge? We finally came up with 14 questions which became the basis for my writing *Creating a Women's Giving Circle Handbook*.<sup>2</sup>

Susie and I made two key decisions. We chose to give half the money to the WRC and specifically to our domestic violence shelter which always needed improvements. The remaining half would be allocated via community grants to help women and girls achieve economic independence. We wanted our gifts to be transformative: to help women become independent and self-supporting.

The other decision that we made was the name – Three Generations Circle of Women's Giving. Susie chose the number three for a couple of reasons. First, it takes three generations to break the cycle of domestic violence. The second reason emphasizes our philanthropic heritage and growth as women; three generations ago our grandmothers gave their time to their family. Then our mothers gave their time to their families and communities. This made it possible for us – the third generation – to give our time and *to give our money as well*.

Three Generations Circle of Women Givers was incorporated in 1999. We started with 16 members and made our first round of grants in 2001, giving \$8,000 to Helen's House to resurface the cement threshold leading into the shelter. We allocated the \$8,000 in community grants for three projects: an alternative high school literacy program for girls, the community college to assist female students, and the Michigan Women's Foundation for a program to encourage young girls' philanthropy. The process moved smoothly because of the staff support from Carmen Slendak, now Carmen Stevens, the WRC development officer who handed all the details for us.

Today we have 65 members and have served as a model for two more giving circles in the area. If our small town of 15,000 and surrounding area of 150,000 can support three women's giving circles, then every town in the United States can and should have one or more.

Beginning in 2000, when I spoke to nonprofit

organizations and women's groups for the Women's Philanthropy Institute (WPI), now located at the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University (COP), I said my dream was to have a giving circle in every major city in the United States. Little did I know that some nine years later, the "tipping point" would have occurred and that dream would have nearly become real. It was just the right time for this astonishing phenomenon.

## THE GIVING CIRCLE MOVEMENT

Women have always contributed time and talent to their communities. The giving circle movement grew in part at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century because women had *capacity* as never before. This expanded capacity arose because of women's increased income, education, and inheritance from families and marriages. Perhaps most significant, women had gained *control* of their finances – of their wealth and consequently of their philanthropy. Women began to appreciate how they could make the world a better place through their philanthropy.

Some women, accustomed to supporting special event fundraisers, recognized the benefits of the giving circle model. Daria Teutonico, former director of the Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers New Ventures in Philanthropy initiative, explained, "With the same amount of money you'd use to write a check to a charity, you get to make more of a difference, spend more time with friends, and learn more about what your community needs."<sup>3</sup>

These philanthropic groups are called "circles" because women relate to the egalitarian, non-hierarchical, and inclusive concept. The concept has been connected for several centuries to women's groups such as sewing *circles* and religious *circles*. The word "giving" in giving circles is credited to former Women's Philanthropy Institute President Patricia Lewis. I called them "donor" circles until she emphatically said no. She said we must use the word "giving," because women think of themselves as givers. One of giving circles' major goals was to grow women as philanthropists – as donors. We needed to start, however, where women were comfortable – as givers.

No one used the term "giving circle" for the early groups because it was not yet part of the philanthropic vocabulary.

Colleen Willoughby, so often credited as the catalyst for the *creation* of many other circles, did not call the Washington Women's Foundation a giving circle until the movement began to grow.

New Ventures in Philanthropy, an initiative of the Forum of Regional Associations of Grantmakers, noticed that giving circles often attracted a diverse group of new donors. It invested time and resources to explore this burgeoning phenomenon as part of its mission to promote philanthropy, especially to those who had not been part of mainstream philanthropy. In the summer of 2004, it convened some of the early giving circle founders in Baltimore to learn more about giving circles. The next year New Ventures published *Giving Together: A National Scan of Giving Circles and Shared Giving*,<sup>4</sup> which garnered national media attention and generated scores of articles in large and small publications.

And the movement continued to grow. In 2007, New Ventures issued a second scan of giving circles, *More Giving Together: An Updated Study of the Continuing Growth and Powerful Impact of Giving Circles and Shared Giving*.<sup>5</sup> That research, which found more than 400 giving circles around the country, suggested that giving circles continue to proliferate and seem likely to be a permanent fixture on the philanthropy landscape.

The final report in the New Ventures series was released in May 2009. Professor Angela Eikenberry, University of Nebraska at Omaha, and consultant Jessica Bearman collaborated on *The Impact of Giving Together*.<sup>6</sup> They found that when donors participate in giving circles they give more, give more strategically, and are more knowledgeable about their community.

Eikenberry has described giving circles as "the democratization of philanthropy." Giving circles allow everyone a place at the philanthropic table. Eikenberry's 2009 book, *Giving Circles: Philanthropy, Voluntary Association, and Democracy*,<sup>7</sup> explores this theme more thoroughly.

## ORIGINS OF THE SIX C'S

Many of the giving circle founders interviewed for this booklet reported that the basis for creating their circles

were the six C's of women's giving: *create, change, commit, connect, collaborate, and celebrate*. As a result, the six C's are interwoven throughout the women founders' stories.

**REBECCA POWER, IMPACT AUSTIN, AUSTIN, TX**

*"We formed Impact Austin around the Six C's of Women's Giving. I never knew how women gave because I never gave. I learned that women love to create something that can change the world for the better. It's through collaboration during our grant review process that women connect and feel really committed to the role they play. We also like to celebrate our accomplishments and our annual meeting gives us that opportunity. Impact Austin has given women the confidence to increase their capacity to give because they have control over the decision-making.*

*We knew that if this was how women give, this was how women would stay in our group. We believed that if we accepted those six C's and kept them in front of us when we were building Impact Austin, we would continue to grow. And we still talk about them. That's why we've been so successful."*

**ANN BAKER, WOMEN'S GIVING ALLIANCE, JACKSONVILLE, FL**

*"We use all of the six C's. You can't change without collaborating. You can't commit to the mission without connecting to the organization and the people involved. And part of the fun is to celebrate your creation."*

Martha Taylor and I created the framework for the six C's by accident. We both worked in Madison, Wisconsin. Martha was Vice President for the University of Wisconsin-Madison Foundation and I was Assistant Director at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. Our paths had crossed because we were both in development; we had no idea then that women's philanthropy would be the foundation for an enduring friendship.

Fundraising consultant Judith Nichols, editor of the fall 1991 issue of the *National Society of Fundraising Executives Journal*,<sup>8</sup> had asked Martha, because of her early work with women and philanthropy at the University of Wisconsin, to write an article on career women and their giving. Martha asked me to help her, and I agreed. That research provided the impetus for our first book, *Reinventing Fundraising:*

*Realizing the Potential of Women's Philanthropy.*<sup>9</sup>

To gather information we decided to hold two focus groups with career women – one with her generation, born between 1946 and 1964, and one with my generation born between 1931 and 1945.

Each focus group included fifteen women. When we analyzed the information, we found similar results for motivations and barriers to women's giving among the two age groups. In addition, we realized that the first five motivations for women's giving began with the letter "C." But the last motivation was "to have fun." How could we turn that motivation into a "C"? Finally an inspiration – "celebrate." That word proved apt as we have experienced much to *celebrate* about women and philanthropy over the last 20 years. From these sessions, other focus groups, and interviews with individual women philanthropists, we compiled the six C's of women's giving.

Women give with the intent to:

- *Create* new solutions to problems; be entrepreneurial through their philanthropy
- *Change* things for the better; make a difference
- *Commit* through volunteerism to the organizations and institutions whose vision they share; often give to organizations to which they have volunteered
- *Connect* with the human face their gift affects; build a partnership with people connected with the project they fund
- *Collaborate* with others – often other women – as part of a larger effort; seek to avoid duplication, competition and waste
- *Celebrate* – have fun together; celebrate their accomplishments; enjoy the deeper meaning and satisfaction of their philanthropy

### THREE NEW C'S FOR A NEW CENTURY

Recognizing that women's roles in society and in philanthropy have continued to evolve, we added three C's in 2005. And there is yet another C to consider—*capacity*. Women's philanthropic potential, through earnings, marriage, and inheritance, has created an unparalleled *capacity* to give.

Increased *capacity* enables women to:

- Take *control* of their lives, their finances, and their philanthropy
- Gain *confidence* to become philanthropic leaders
- Have the *courage* to challenge the old ways of doing things and take risks with their giving to bring about change

There was no better proof of the impact of the six C's plus three than Martha's and my friendship and our own bigger journey into philanthropy. We helped *create* the women's philanthropy movement that includes giving circles. We *changed* the way women think about philanthropy. Our *connection* and *collaboration* came from our heartfelt *commitment* to women's philanthropy. We *celebrated* the joy of our work together in our publications and presentations. We also *celebrated* the results of the women and philanthropy movement as we saw women take *control* of their financial resources, gain the *confidence* to become philanthropic, and act *courageously* by investing their money and taking risks.

# Founder's Stories

Two factors propelled the growth of this grassroots phenomenon – media interest and the powerful women's social network. Reporters and editors from small journals to large metropolitan newspapers and national magazines began writing about giving circles and their founders. As a result, those who were considering starting a circle frequently called the founders for advice.

Today, because of the increasing amount of information available, especially online, it is easier to begin a circle. Those interested can learn about giving circles from books, articles, research reports, and online searches. Yet and still, the founders continue to serve as irreplaceable resources. Because we were so often asked for our advice, several of us wrote books about how to start a giving circle.<sup>10</sup>

But the big questions remained: who were these bold women who ventured into previously unknown territory? What motivated them to take this challenge? Did they realize they were growing a movement? How did they get from there to here and why? What can we learn from their experiences?

As I reflected on the stories, I found that the women shared important characteristics.

- **Courage and idealism.** The founders were fearless, determined to succeed. It was more than a passion to them; it was their calling. They were “driven” to take on the project; some twenty years later, many remain deeply involved.
- **Compassion for others.** Each founder wanted to make the world a better place.
- **Understanding of equality.** The founders discovered that this journey allowed them to work together, to explore a range of experiences and perspectives in their communities, and to rejoice in the commonalities as well as appreciate the differences of humankind.
- **Shared accomplishments.** The interviewees were reluctant to talk about their personal achievements because they wanted to acknowledge and recognize everyone who had contributed to their success. None took sole credit for the entire process. All were sincere in their belief that everyone brought a different skill to the table which helped the giving circle succeed.
- **Joy of being together and giving together.** They loved the connection and sociability of being with one another.
- **Importance and power of their giving.** By giving together they understood the value of leveraging their gifts, the power and impact of a larger gift, and the importance of a plan for giving.

**SHEILA PAISNER, WOMEN'S ENDOWMENT FUND, JEWISH COMMUNITY FEDERATION, MINNEAPOLIS, MN (1988)**

**“As campaign chair for the Women’s Division of the Minneapolis Jewish Federation in 1987, I found that even women who worked outside the home or were professional women, would give only \$100 without consulting their husband. This came as a shock to me. My giving was always part of a family gift, but I suggested the size of the gift.”**

When the Jewish Federation in Minneapolis wanted more women donors, they knew exactly who to recruit for help. Sheila Paisner was the catalyst behind the first women’s giving circle that came out of the Jewish Community Federation, the Women’s Endowment Fund (WEF). “I knew Judi Brown, who was head of Business and Professional Women in Minneapolis, and we wanted to establish a program to educate women about the need for philanthropy and their ability to give on their own,” she says.

When they founded WEF in 1988 as a designated fund of the Jewish Community Foundation (JCF) of the Minneapolis Jewish Federation (MJF), women were asked to contribute \$100 a year to join. In retrospect, Sheila says they started too low in their ask. “We underestimated these women; they could have given far more. It was a good lesson to learn and I’m sure if we had asked for more it would have happened. Maybe the buy in was not high enough but the interest was, and we surely got a good response.”

True to their original purpose, WEF informed women about what was happening in their community, how to handle money and, based on their interests, how to prioritize their giving. They targeted their grantmaking for Jewish women’s special needs in the community. “It was a long time before we were able to really get started because we were only using the interest from the endowment. But we kept people’s attention during this time through the Federation and by sponsoring various programs about finance, our main programmatic thrust,” Sheila says.

After a few years’ hiatus, WEF has been revitalized and continues to inform women about using money to fulfill values and life goals. Their grants have included support for a faith-based comprehensive sexuality education program for youth in grades 7 to 12, kosher food for families using emergency services, programs about domestic violence, and

therapeutic and interactive music for elderly women.

Born and educated in Canada, Sheila married and began to raise a family in a small prairie town with few Jews. In a 2001 ceremony inducting Sheila into the National Women’s Hall of Fame, Sheila’s daughter-in-law Liz Paisner stated, “During these busy years, Sheila willingly found time to assist the Sisters at the local Catholic hospital when needed.”

Liz continued, “Moving to Minneapolis in 1959, Sheila began her volunteer career. But it was the Jewish Federation where she wore her biggest hats and inspired thousands of women in the community to support health and human services by contributing to the Federation. In the mid 1980’s Sheila broke the Federation’s “glass ceiling” with relish when she assumed leadership positions held previously only by men. When she served as the first woman campaign chair of the Minneapolis Jewish Federation campaign in 1984, they raised \$11 million, which as Sheila says, “was a lot of money then.” She says she had no women role models but always felt up to the task at hand and appreciates the opportunities she had as a woman of her generation.

Sheila has always had the *confidence* to do what was needed to succeed. But she says, “I am proudest in my life of the *commitment* I’ve made to the community I came to as an adult and to see the results of what I’ve helped *change* and *create*. It’s important to see the outcome, but even better is seeing the *creative* part grow into a reality.”

**JULIE FISHER CUMMINGS, LOVELIGHT FOUNDATION, DETROIT, MI (1992)**

**“There has to be a *connection* between the donor and the recipient. I call it a heart *connection*. People need to feel and know where their money is going. The problems of this world can be solved by connecting those in need to those with resources. I have friends who ask me all the time about where they should give their money. They want that *connection*.”**

Although not a typical giving circle, the Lovelight Foundation is the result of three women’s desire to help their peer group become knowledgeable about the issues: to *connect* them through their own funding and hands on involvement and to encourage other women to give and get involved.

There can't possibly be enough hours in the day to fuel all of Julie Fisher Cummings' energy. Julie is managing trustee of her family foundation and a co-founder of the Lovelight Foundation. She is also pursuing a master's degree at Columbia University.

"When I moved back to Palm Beach from Detroit after my kids were in college, I felt I didn't have anything meaningful to do. I don't like bridge and I tried golf but that wasn't satisfying. I never did like social galas – I would rather give money," she says. "So I decided to go back to school to study public policy. I had been involved with so many nonprofits and grant funding and knew the importance of impacting policy to make the systems work better."

The inspiration for her degree started with a move from Florida to Detroit in 1989 so her children could attend the same schools she did while growing up. But the relocation led to more than just her children's education. She says, "It was a life-altering moment when an article on the front page of a Detroit paper stated that 49 percent of the children in Detroit lived in poverty, but \$1.3 million dollars for WIC funds (the supplemental nutrition program for women and children) was being returned to the federal government because the city hadn't administered it. I was so angry. Here you have hungry children and you're not feeding them. I knew then that it all comes back to systems."

That was the beginning of Julie's awareness of the importance of having good systems and policy in place. "It's not enough to just have money to solve problems if the money can't be properly utilized and if there's no *connection* between the issues, the grantor, and the recipients," she says.

So Julie initiated that *connection* by establishing a funding vehicle. "I wanted to let my girlfriends in the suburbs know about what was happening below Eight Mile Road," she explains. "I believed people would help but they just didn't know about what was going on and how to do anything about it. And they didn't have the time to go out and find answers. I figured if we brought the programs to them, they would definitely do something if asked."

Julie founded the Lovelight Foundation with two friends, Denise Ilitch and Susan Kleinpell. "Denise had lived and worked in Detroit all her life and Sue had served on a family foundation and seen what a big impact can be made at the

grassroots level with small amounts of money," she says. "I really believe the Teddy Roosevelt quotation, 'Do what you can with what you have where you are.'"

The name Lovelight came about by chance. "We were just sitting around talking and I have this thing about hearts—I really wanted the heart connection and bringing light to it. The name Lovelight just made sense," Julie says.

Education played a major role in the early work of the Lovelight Foundation. After choosing women, children, and families as their mission, Julie and her friends researched where they could be most effective in Detroit. "It took us a while to get started because we met with a number of people not only in Detroit but other places in the country to find out what might have the most impact."

As they considered a structure for Lovelight, Julie says they didn't want to ask their friends for money. "We just wanted Lovelight to be a pass through organization. We knew that if we educated women they would supply the money. And it worked. We never asked them for one penny. When we brought in experts in the fields to speak about the issues and provide opportunities to solve those problems, they wrote their checks to Lovelight and we provided the fiduciary care of their money."

One early funding experience at an inner city Detroit school deeply affected Julie. "When we arrived, the African American principal told us, 'we don't need you white wealthy women from the suburbs and we don't need your charity.'" Julie says that caused her to pause and think. "I said 'you're absolutely right. We need you more than you need us. How can we partner?'" The principal told them that they had a brand new library but they had no books. Lovelight purchased books. Women donors put the books on carts and rolled the carts to rooms between classes.

Julie credits her mother Marjorie with being her angel. "We were holding a Christmas party for the homeless at Cobo Hall. My mother suggested that homeless children needed new underwear so we went to Carter's Outlet and asked the store manager how many packages of underwear they had on the walls. There were 3,000 packages and mother told her, 'We'll take the wall and all the sleepwear for those that wear diapers.' Mother said that buying the underwear was better than buying couture."

After 15 years of providing funding for projects in the Detroit area, Lovelight went into hiatus in the mid 2000's and is now being reconstituted as a private foundation and women's fund. The Foundation will serve as a learning and giving vehicle for Julie's family, inform women about women and girl's issues, support programs for women and girls, and provide a safe forum for women to discuss these issues and their philanthropy.

As for how this will work, Julie says, "My passion is to *create a connection* which enriches all parties on many levels. We're going to learn along the way through *collaboration*. I consider this the next iteration of giving circles." Whatever happens, Julie is setting the pace and raising the bar for the rest of us.

**COLLEEN WILLOUGHBY, WASHINGTON WOMEN'S FOUNDATION, SEATTLE, WA (1995)**

"After forty years of active volunteerism, I became aware of a disconnect for women donors between their capacity to give and their *confidence* to make major gifts. The model we *created* was a new form of giving. I started and focused on women because they were the unseen and unrecognized potential for new philanthropic dollars. I have always been interested in promoting women's leadership. I feel strongly that it was the community's loss by not having more women as donors. And I am always trying to express the idea that philanthropy is more than addressing dire need – it is also about *creating new solutions through new ventures for the community*."

Colleen is the mother of giving circles, although she was not aware of the term until after she founded the Washington Women's Foundation (WWF) in 1995 in Seattle. "The term 'giving circle' was coined by the Women's Philanthropy Institute in the late 90's," she says. Colleen and WWF have inspired dozens of other giving circles around the country over the past decade, particularly after a 1998 issue of *People*<sup>11</sup> featured their story.

Colleen had experienced some of the challenges and barriers in women's philanthropy before founding the WWF.

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"Giving circles  
have empowered  
women across the  
country."

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– Colleen Willoughby

In 1986, after chairing the United Way campaign, she was asked to raise funds for a Campfire capital campaign in Seattle. "The campaign had stalled and needed another million. I thought it would be easy to do—it didn't sound too hard." But, it was much more difficult than she imagined, primarily because the very donors she was sure would be interested – women – were not interested. "There was a disconnect between women's capacity and their *confidence* to give. I believed women were not thought of as philanthropists and were both unrecognized and underdeveloped," she says.

A consummate volunteer, Colleen knew women traditionally contributed time and talent. But she found, "they just hadn't yet realized that their time was not the currency that was going to get the job done. Women have often generated big ideas, and then they always had to seek funds from other people in order to get the projects accomplished, usually by organizing fundraisers."

Colleen felt strongly that her *creation* should become an innovative model for women to build a new source of major funds from women donors. The emerging women's funds were giving to programs for women and girls to support equity and social justice issues. She explains, "Although these remain critical causes, I wanted to widen the lens for giving broadly to the community."

Colleen was on the board of the Seattle Foundation when she founded WWF; it was organized as an advised fund at the Foundation. The arrangement worked well for both groups until the WWF grew to almost 500 members and was allocating nearly \$1 million a year. WWF was then established as a separate, independent public foundation and began hiring staff to support members' educational and grantmaking activities. WWF currently has four paid staff.

WWF set the annual contribution at \$2300. "We wanted to set the bar high because the data showed that women's wealth capacity was growing. This number seemed a real possibility," Colleen explains. More than a decade later, she believes WWF has validated that potential. "We now have 480 members who have invested more than \$8.4 million in the community through grants to 700 organizations."

Starting a new venture and being an entrepreneur is not only a tradition in Seattle, it is an important part of Colleen's family. Her father took the family ornamental iron business and expanded it after WWII into new product lines. He also helped Colleen set up her first business when she was ten years old – a lemonade stand on the 17th hole of a public golf course close to her home. This worked well until Park Department officials told her politely that this was not allowed. "I guess I inherited his ability to continually be looking for bold new ventures," she says.

Women's leadership is important to Colleen. She credits some of her leadership skills to participation in Girls Nation in Washington, DC when she was in high school. She explains, "Even though there was only one woman in the US Senate at that time (Margaret Chase Smith), at Girls Nation I saw there could be a bigger picture and how women could lead."

Reflecting on the strides made both in women's philanthropy and women's giving circles, Colleen says, "I am proud to share results of a recent WWF survey which indicated that 76 percent of the women who have been part of the WWF say they now give more strategically and 26 percent of them say their annual giving is between \$10,000 and \$50,000 a year."

Most of the founders interviewed for this project concurred that their spouses have not only encouraged but championed their work. Colleen is no exception. "George has been so supportive. There was never any question with him that it is 'our money' rather than his money. I was the one who had to work through that." This evolution took place early in Colleen and George's marriage and no doubt influenced her as she helped other women claim ownership and partnership of family assets.

As women in WWF gained *confidence* in *controlling* their finances and became more philanthropic, they also influenced family giving. Colleen says that WWF has an adage: It is not only the dollars we give, but the dollars we influence. "Spouses receive the benefit of members' enhanced community knowledge about areas needing support. Many members tell us that philanthropic decisions have become shared family decisions and younger members of the family have also become a part of these decisions."

After 13 years as WWF president, Colleen transferred

leadership to a new president in 2008. Fortunately, Colleen claims she has not retired from the field of philanthropy and will continue to explore new ways for women's leadership to flourish. She talks about "...perhaps connecting the dots of organizations I've started – some kind of virtual network. But right now I'm giving myself time to think about what I'd like to do next. I guess I still don't know what I want to be when I grow up." Whatever it is, Seattle and women's philanthropy will be the richer for it.

**DEBORAH HOFFMAN, FUNDING ARTS NETWORK,  
MIAMI, FL (1996)**

"During the 1990's I was very concerned about diminishing government and corporate funding for cultural programs, especially in South Florida. In my community I found there were a few models of successful fundraising, each using a similar technique – the \$1,000 gift level. This seemed like a good idea. For me it was always important to question the way things are done in order to understand them and figure out solutions. I liked the role of being a *change agent*."

Deborah's efforts resulted in *fifty over fifty, inc.* – seeking 50 women who would contribute \$1,000 annually to *create* a \$50,000 funding pool. Immediately successful, the membership soon exceeded 50 women and, after a few years, the name was changed to Funding Arts Network (FAN), reflecting more clearly the mission of the organization.

Although the term "giving circle" had not yet become a recognized phrase, the idea of friends pooling individual gifts of \$1,000 per year clicked with Deborah. She chose to have only women involved because she believed it was important to provide women experience in philanthropy by *creating* a pool of money and granting it together. But she always has been careful to make sure that women understand it is possible to give individually, as a couple, and as a family. And, a benefit of this women's giving circle is that men, learning from their spouses about the needs of the arts, also have contributed.

Deborah always has been passionate about arts and culture although she does not consider herself an artist. "I've always been interested in theatre, art, and music. When I was growing up I longed to be an actress." She fulfilled her dream by acting in college and community theatre

productions. It is hard to imagine this petite, classy lady playing an accordion, but as a teenager she played in an accordion trio, Two Chords and a Key, that entertained throughout the community.

Deborah's mother influenced Deborah in many ways; the most significant was helping people in need. She says her mother spent a lifetime finding answers to help people. "Mother was a strong networker even though we didn't use the word in that context then. Although always in ill health, she constantly exerted herself on behalf of others and touched the lives of a diverse group of people across the community. I feel extremely honored to have been influenced by her. A lot of what she did was from her bedside on the telephone. I can only imagine what she could have done with computers and other technology that we have today," she says.

Serving as a role model for her 10 grandchildren's philanthropic giving is important to Deborah. She remembers them each December by making a major gift to organizations that help children and families. The beneficiary organization sends a holiday certificate to the youngsters, detailing the contribution made in their honor. In a letter Deborah treasures, one of her nieces said how proud she is that her aunt is helping others through the gift. Grandchildren receive a gift on their birthday plus an opportunity to contribute \$50 to a nonprofit of their choice. She says their gifts have ranged from the SmileTrain to an animal shelter and to a group that feeds the homeless.

Deborah continues to lead by *creating* new and different ways to practice philanthropy and *change* the world in the process. She organized Partners for Artisans with 12 friends which also uses the \$1,000 funding model. Its purpose is to mix together the members' interests in local and global funding in order to provide financial assistance to artisans from South Florida and the Caribbean. She says, "Giving to artisans not only helps them maintain their livelihood, but has a major impact on the important needs of their families, providing resources for health and education."

Although funds are provided to men and women, Deborah believes the funds are especially critical for those women who are the sole support for their family. "Global giving is gaining such interest today because people

recognize that helping a worker be productive has a ripple effect in the communities in which they live and, ultimately, in the world," she says.

Reflecting on her future, Deborah plans to continue to be a community activist. She believes it is important to be a participant in her community and not, "Sit back and wish for *changes*, but to jump in and make things happen."

**SHEILA CARROLL, WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP COUNCIL, UNITED WAY OF STANISLAUS COUNTY, MODESTO, CA (1998)**

*"I have the confidence to speak up and try to change things. When I was active in politics, it took a lot of confidence to come forward and be a voice at the table. But that experience empowered me and I feel that with confidence and my personality, I can help empower other women."*

As a student in the sixties, Sheila was inspired by President John Fitzgerald Kennedy's inaugural speech, "Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country." "I knew then that I could *change* things for the better," she says. Throughout her career, Sheila has neither forgotten those words nor doubted her ability to *change* things and make a difference.

When asked to start a women's giving circle within the United Way of Stanislaus County in 1998, Sheila went right to the task. "We launched the Women's Leadership Initiative (WLI), recently renamed the Women's Leadership Council (WLC), to help women become more philanthropic. Women aren't always aware of their potential and we wanted them to understand that potential and to step up and be a part of the power of women and philanthropy," she says.

The WLC hosts an annual luncheon, "Power of the Purse," to raise money for projects the women select. The most recent has been for emancipated children who are just out of foster care. "Their stories bring us to tears," she says. "It's incredible what they've gone through and how they survive."

Sheila has served in many leadership positions in her community and state, but perhaps the experience with the Republican Party of California had the most impact. "In the 90's, I was state president of the California Federation of Republican Women when the party was run by the Good

Ol' Boys," she says. "For a woman to come forward and be a voice at the table took a lot of *courage*. I hadn't been an aggressive person up until then, but I sure learned to play hardball. It definitely toughened me." While state president her issues were to elect women and pass legislation that ensured fairness to women in the areas of education and health. She was rewarded for her volunteer activities when named 2007 Legislative Woman of the Year by California's 25th Assembly district.

The *courage* Sheila gained from her political career helped her deal with a horrible tragedy. In April 2002 her husband Ross and two others were killed in an airplane crash. Sheila was thrown from the plane when it went down. A piece of it landed on her and she spent the night waiting for rescue. Her husband and the pilot died on impact and she watched her best friend die – trapped under the plane – and could do nothing about it. When she was found the following morning, rescue workers told her she was one-half hour away from dying herself.

It was almost a year before she recovered from massive, multiple injuries and says she is doing fine now. Considering what happened and why she is alive today she reflects, "I was devastated about 'why' I was the only survivor of the airplane crash. I was searching for an answer. Dozens of people said that it just wasn't my turn, that I have more to do – to be here for my family, my friends, and my community. It was the answer I was looking for."

The incident changed Sheila's life in many ways including her volunteer focus. "After the accident, I knew that I wanted a kinder, gentler world and not any more hassle, so I pulled away from politics." As the catalyst for the WLC and a leader her entire life, Sheila believes it's essential for women to understand the importance of leadership. She says, "Leadership is to some extent, an innate ability everyone has. But to develop it you need to learn from others. And you need to be organized and have a vision of where you want to take an organization. Then you can inspire and motivate others."

But she also feels strongly that leadership must be inclusive to be successful. "It shouldn't be something that belongs just to one person; everyone must be kept apprised of what is happening and where the organization is going.

Put simply, if you feel part of something then you will work for it. If you're not included, you won't."

According to Sheila, planning for the future of a giving circle also involves good leadership. "As a leader, you have your time to motivate and excite and capture people's attention. But after awhile, what you have done is "old stuff" and you need to step back. There's always somebody out there with something new to offer. I am so grateful I have people to mentor and excited to be able to help take an organization to the next level with new leadership. There is a time to let new energy come forth. And if you're a good leader, you'll know when that time is."

As a young girl, Sheila lived in Asia while her father served as a military doctor. At the age of eight, she recalls seeing children begging on the street. "It made me feel both sad because I had what they wanted and needed, and lucky because I did." Sheila lived in Tokyo right after World War II when the city was still bombed out. "A woman worked for us who had been a musician and was now our maid. But she did something I'll never forget. A pianist, she no longer had a piano. So she colored a piece of cardboard to look like a keyboard and practiced on it." Sheila also remembers some of the other people who worked for the family. "They had nothing. They would take our old blankets home to make clothes and take food to feed their family. When you see things like that, it can't help but have a lifetime effect on a person. But maybe the most incredible part is that, despite all their hardship, they kept going," she says. This lifelong lesson served Sheila well when she endured her own hardship.

She doesn't recall her parents being philanthropic – giving money or volunteering. However, she does remember her father telling her that he didn't want her to be a selfish, self-centered person. "He said he wanted me to give to others. I think he came to believe though, that maybe I overdid it a bit," she says. "He couldn't understand why I would give so much without being paid."

As for the future, Sheila says she'll probably still be involved with the Council but has passed on the leadership responsibility to others who will sustain the organization. "I will continue going down the volunteer road but I'm just not sure where. My *commitment* is in the community."

**DEBORAH MCMANUS, THE WELLMET GROUP,  
NEW YORK CITY, NY (1999)**

“At the end of every May meeting we have champagne and stay around another half hour or so. We *celebrate* and say ‘Yippee! Look what we did.’ We’ve gone into some tough neighborhoods – we’re not ‘Pashmina Mommy’ types. It has taken *courage* to do some of these things and we *celebrate* that.”

The WellMet Group began after Deborah read an article in the 1998 issue of *People*<sup>12</sup> about Colleen Willoughby and her friends who had *created* a women’s giving circle in Seattle. She says, “There come times in your life you’re ready to do something else. I had recently retired from practicing architecture and this was one of those times for me. After reading the article, I called two friends, Rose-Lee Reinhard and Franny Eberhart, who had moved a long time ago to New York from Chicago as had I. We loved our adopted city and wanted to give back something tangible. It felt wrong not to do something.”

The next year Deborah and her two friends started The WellMet Group, named in honor of the friendly greeting in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, “Hail, welcome and well met.” “The three of us decided we would look for the new kids on the block – for the emerging 501(c)3 groups led by dynamos. We wanted to carve out our own place. The big players such as the community foundations tend to go for established charities. That’s exactly what we didn’t want to do. We wanted to be the first or second funder,” Deborah says.

“We cold-called Bob Edgar, Vice President of Donor Relations at The New York Community Trust, and talked our way into his office. He was wonderful. He said it was a terrific idea, and although he had not heard of such a thing, he loved the concept. I believe the Trust’s involvement allayed the fears of some of the early members and gave us gravitas,” she says.

WellMet continues to partner with The New York Community Trust and has distributed \$1.3 million in grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$20,000. Dues are \$5,000 a year and membership has hovered around 37 women. A few years ago, Deborah said that WellMet couldn’t get any larger than Rose-Lee’s living room where they meet, but she is relieved

Rose-Lee has moved to a larger place, so they can still grow. Of the original 16 women who started WellMet, 10 are still active, attend the four annual meetings, and go on the required site visits.

Deborah grew up in Evanston, IL in what she describes as a typical family in the 1950’s where her father worked and her mother was a homemaker. “My mother always volunteered and was smart as a whip. She probably would not have stayed at home had she been born a generation later,” she says.

Her first introduction to philanthropy came at age seven. “I received two Toni dolls for Christmas. I was thrilled until my mother asked me which one I was going to keep – that I couldn’t have both and had to give one away. I was terribly upset but I knew in my heart that it was the right thing to do and ended up feeling good about it,” she relates. The other doll went to someone suggested by their cleaning woman, whose husband was the minister of a nearby church. Deborah compares that experience from so many Christmases ago to today when she says, “Just look around and see how incredibly lucky we are. We have all this stuff that we don’t need – those extra Toni dolls.”

The WellMet Group is dedicated to becoming personally involved in contributing to the city’s future with a hands-on approach to grantmaking and especially to identifying relatively unknown emerging nonprofits. But Lady Bountiful is not the image that WellMet members want, and they take great pains not to give that impression. “We feel privileged to get to know these people and their organizations,” she maintains. “In fact, over the years three or four of our members have joined the boards of some of the organizations we’ve funded. They realized they didn’t only want to meet with them once on site visits but wanted to stay involved.”

Deborah expresses her love for New York through her work with WellMet. She says, “I live in New York but I didn’t know how many truly wonderful people are out there. Each of these organizations was started by or is run by an incredible individual. Many came from poor backgrounds. All are scrappy fighting idealists. They are awesome. They feel strongly that their community must be better and if they don’t do something, no one else will.”

Several women in The WellMet Group have established their own foundations. Deborah explains, “My mother used to say that when you learn, you build this great cobweb and every bit of information that you learn goes on that cobweb and it expands and reverberates in so many different ways, and becomes bigger and bigger and more magical and more beautiful. I can’t help but believe that this kind of involvement which so many of us have had in WellMet, has transformed the patterns of all of our own cobwebs in other lovely ways.”

The mother of three children, Deborah says, “Most of us in WellMet have daughters and we hope that philanthropy gets into their DNA.” She sees herself continuing to be involved in WellMet forever. “I love it and will always want to help make New York City a better place.”

#### AMY KOSSOFF, WOMENADE, WASHINGTON, DC (2001)

*Amy wanted to find a way to do more but with less of her own money. A friend suggested she tell her story and ask people to give her cash to help the people she saw every day as a doctor in homeless shelters. No one was more surprised than Amy when it worked. “I guess they trusted me with their money. Maybe they wanted to be able to do something more than socialize and go to dinner. They wanted to feel needed, make a difference and celebrate being together.”*

Amy says she had never heard of giving circles when she founded Washington Womenade in 2001. “But it was a case of ‘Share the Burden’ rather than ‘Share the Wealth,’” she says. “I was writing checks for patients I worked with in the DC homeless clinics until one day my husband Rob noticed that I had written three checks for Pepco utility company and none were for us.” While most women would say that they can’t help spending money, Amy says, “I just can’t help giving it away.”

A 1983 graduate of George Washington University Medical School with a degree in Internal Medicine, Amy has worked with patients in homeless shelters since 1994. “I found I really loved the patient population. They are very grateful because few people have ever been nice to them before. And their pain or sickness is real. Nobody comes in whining about a cold,” she explains. “These patients are really sick.”

She recalls an incident when she wrote a check for rent for a woman with sores on her legs. “The surgeon operated and told her to keep her legs up to heal. However, she had no place to live and no way to keep her legs up. Her rent was \$17 a month, but she also had \$200 in utility bills she couldn’t pay.” Amy helped support her while her legs healed. The woman she helped has been working productively for the past 10 years.

But her conversation with Rob made her think about how she could do more with less of her money.

Amy’s friend, Lisa Herrick, had annual potluck dinners with her women friends. One night Amy and her book group, which included Lisa, went out to dinner for Lisa’s birthday. Amy told her story, and Lisa suggested that they have an event similar to her women’s potlucks, but ask each woman to bring a small donation in addition to a dish. The idea worked and Womenade was created.

Most of the money collected goes to people Amy knows or individuals the social worker recommends, but she says occasionally someone else knows an individual in need. “I remember one woman who knew of a couple from the Ivory Coast who were working as security guards in a Federal building and lost their jobs after 9/11 because they didn’t have Green Cards. They were in the US as political refugees and their Green Cards had not yet come, although they had applied and been waiting for over 4 years. They needed \$1,000 for legal assistance, which they didn’t have. They lost their house and everything else because of this. Womenade helped them, and they recently received their Green Cards.”

The women who are part of Washington Womenade greatly respect Amy and know she will do the right thing with their money. However, after several people she works with told her that people say, “Ask Dr. Kossoff, she’s a big sucker,” she does not give cash directly to the person. Instead, she pays their pharmacy or utility bills. “But if I know the person well, I will give cash.”

As for the amount of money she wants to make at each potluck, Amy says, “Well, not too much because we always want to have a party with lots of people and we need to run out of money to be sure they come to the next one. A real ‘pay as you go’ or ‘pay as you play’ philosophy. We

invite all the women we know to attend, and we ask them to bring a potluck dish, and a check made out to Washington Womenade.”

The name Womenade originated with her friend, Lisa Herrick, who had a dream one night. She saw an airplane with an advertising banner streaming from behind: “If you have lemons you make lemonade. If you have women, you make Womenade.”

“We never intended for Washington Womenade to become a national organization but in 2002, one of our group had a friend who was a writer for *Real Simple*<sup>3</sup> and she did a profile about Womenade. Two years later the *Washington Post*<sup>4</sup> wrote an article that was syndicated and the idea spread nationwide.

Amy believes growing up in a solid middle class family which valued social justice contributed to her starting Washington Womenade. She says it’s innate for her to defend and “stick up” for others and that when she was a little girl she was always bringing home stray puppies and getting in fights on the playground to protect the underdog.

Amy feels that Womenade’s emphasis on meeting individuals’ immediate needs is important. “Some problems are beyond solving immediately. You have to take a step at a time. If someone needs \$800 for a deposit or they lose the apartment they’ve been waiting for, I want to be sure they get that \$800 and can get out of a homeless shelter and into a home.” She believes this act is transformational philanthropy as it is the first step to getting someone off the street and into a place of his or her own.

Amy’s children, ages 16, 13, and 9 also support Amy’s involvement with Womenade. She says her oldest son is thrilled by it and collects and counts the money from each event.

Amy describes her experience with Washington Womenade in four words: friendship, generosity, fun, and good food. “It has kept my friendships strong with women who are important to me, and I have met so many new women. I *celebrate* my good fortune in being with these women and, together, being useful as well.”

**JANE SCHOEN, WOMEN OF TEXAS INSTRUMENTS FUND, DALLAS, TX (2001)**

“There are a lot of TV shows about doctors and lawyers but not about engineers. Women engineers are not seen as glamorous but are depicted as dorky and nerdy and the Women of Texas Instruments Fund (Women of TI) is committed to changing that perception. We even call one aspect of our program, High-Tech High Heels. I like talking to girls and showing them we’re not geeks. They say, ‘Gosh, you’re just like my mom and my mom’s friends.’”

The Women of TI Fund was established in June 2001 because founding member Jane Schoen says, “The senior women of TI looked around at our careers and paused. We knew we had wonderful professions but wondered why there weren’t more women with us. The more we plowed into the issue, the more we found that girls were under informed and discouraged from taking math and science. Even some of the women at TI had had very personal and unfavorable experiences with this same issue and were put off themselves from pursuing the STEM subjects of science, technology, engineering, and math.”

Fortunately, Jane was not dissuaded from studying math when growing up in dairy farm country in rural New York State. “I took a lot of math classes in high school because I had a teacher who encouraged me. We find that girls who major in math and engineering do so because someone significant has planted a seed to keep the subject alive for them,” she says.

Jane was also interested in music and believes there is a correlation between talent in music and math. “There are a lot of TI employees walking around who are also musicians, a really large number and it’s quite uncanny,” she says.

Majoring in music at college was Jane’s dream until she arrived there. “When I got to college as a clarinet player, I found out there were a lot of people better than me. They were really good. So I thought about what else I could do and decided on math.” Jane knows that was one of her most significant life decisions. “My math major made me very valuable to a high tech company because they saw me as being able to solve problems in a logical, trustworthy way.”

There were few girls studying math at the State University of New York Potsdam when Jane was in college, but she says, "I didn't care and I'm not sure why. Maybe there's something in my DNA that truly makes me more comfortable with men than women," she suggests. But on the other hand, she says one of her life goals is to be a woman leader who works well with both genders.

Through the Women of TI Fund Jane explains, "We want to help close the gender gap in math and science. Too often women are told they should study other subjects. We want to encourage them to pursue a profession that will lead to a career in an engineering or a high tech firm."

"We want to start in the middle schools before girls get caught up in just being popular and may not naturally gravitate to math and science," Jane says. But she acknowledges they are having growing pains and part of it is finding the right mixture of programs and tracking data on students. "Getting your hands on career choices and AP scores is not easy. What we have now is a puzzle and we need to keep improving the design. It's very hands on and we're finding that getting the money is only part of the process."

Membership in TI Women is open to any woman in the company. Their asking model has been one-on-one tilted towards the senior members of the company. "Initially we recruited only women because the case for action really resonates with women. But a couple of years ago, we broadened our scope to include senior men and wondered why we hadn't done that earlier. They all have daughters and wives and sisters. As soon as we started talking to them, they got it, especially if they had daughters. Some of our largest donors are now male leaders of the company, including several senior male executives," she explains.

Although Jane acknowledges that Texas Instruments is a male dominated corporation and women have to learn to thrive in that environment, she says that she has a most rewarding career. "I point out to girls that earnings are potentially strong and they may get to travel all over the world. This is an underexposed aspect of our profession," she says.

Jane is proud of what the Women of TI have accomplished. But she assesses, "We are in the trenches

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"I feel our giving circle is creating philanthropists."

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— Ann Baker

right now, going from infancy to maturity. We're going from the beginning of the idea and doing some pilot things, to the implementation of the programs we want to support." Optimistic about the future, she relates that Texas Instruments has supported the Women of TI Fund and the Fund has been able to leverage corporate dollars through the TI Foundation.

Jane is deeply involved with the Dallas Women's Foundation (DWF) through which the Women of TI allocate their grants from a donor-advised fund. A DWF board member, Jane says, "I love it. Right now I'm helping them re-engineer some of their processes to create a scalable and flexible structure to grant money in faster and more measurable ways. This is a fascinating part of my life."

ANN BAKER AND COURTENAY WILSON, WOMEN'S GIVING ALLIANCE, JACKSONVILLE, FL (2001)

"We came from similar backgrounds. But each of us had a little different approach and our *collaboration* made our giving circle effective and successful." Courtenay says she was the one who had always been involved in grantmaking and Ann's focus was primarily promoting and marketing the Foundation.

Ann and Courtenay, volunteer leaders in their community, combined their different skill sets to *collaborate* on a new funding model which benefits women and girls in Northeast Florida. Being leaders comes naturally to both women. Both Ann and Courtenay attended all girl schools. Courtenay says, "I still think there are many benefits in attending an all women's school. The experience helped me when I joined boards. I didn't grow up thinking that gender played a role in leadership because all the leaders were women. As a result of my education, I've always considered myself equal on a board or committee." They also attribute their leadership skills to years of service in the Junior League.

They often talked to one another about philanthropy. After Courtenay read the 1998 *People*<sup>15</sup> article about the Washington Women's Foundation (WWF) and Colleen Willoughby, she shared it with Ann. That was the beginning of the Women's Giving Alliance (the Alliance) in Jacksonville, Florida.

At the time Ann and Courtenay were trustees of the Community Foundation of Jacksonville and Ann was the first woman chair. They thought that the WWF model would be a great way to engage women in philanthropy and knew they could make it happen in their community. “We had three other women trustees on the Foundation board and they supported it, too,” Ann says. “We got even more fired up and sent out a letter to our friends explaining the concept.” They also contacted Colleen Willoughby at the Washington Women’s Foundation who shared her experiences.

The response to their letter was overwhelming and they began having coffees to explain more about their idea to others. “Before we knew it, 100 women expressed interest. It went way beyond what Courtenay and I envisioned,” Ann says.

Ann and Courtenay had observed that most programming to introduce the community to Foundation programs and activities was geared toward men, and when women were included, they tended to be silent and/or ignored. “In the past women’s husbands often controlled the charitable and philanthropic giving with little concern for the input and interest of their wives,” Ann says. To address these issues, they, along with other female trustees, started hosting women-only lunches to talk about philanthropy. “These meetings were stimulating and the women were eager to learn more about ways to address critical needs in the community. Then we wondered how we could take this to a different level and turn this interest into action,” Courtenay says.

The Alliance was launched in November 2001 as an initiative of the Community Foundation. More than 150 women attended the first event, far exceeding the goal of 100 women. That first year, they recruited 163 founding members.

Both Ann and Courtenay had always been philanthropic, especially to the arts and the community foundation. But Ann says she thought her giving was not very focused. “For a long time I was a victim of other people’s passions. All of a sudden I got to the point where I thought, ‘this is my money and I want to give to my passion.’ I had supported everyone’s everything. Maybe it made me feel important but you finally grow up and I changed my ideas about giving. I found there was a difference between charity and philanthropy. They are different but both are necessary.”

Courtenay had a similar reaction. “Most of my giving

until founding the WGA had been to charity. As a result of the Alliance, I have learned so much about the needs of girls and women in our community. I’m on the education committee where we make *connections* with one another as well as with important community issues.” She continues, “We meet at various grantee agencies, have coffees, and get together to learn about current issues such as childhood obesity and girls coming out of foster care.”

Their initial goals were to increase philanthropy in the Northeast Florida area, involve women in strategic giving that produces lasting impact, improve the lives of women and girls in Northeast Florida, and build an endowment to benefit future generations of women and girls.

Ann, Courtenay, and members of the Alliance wanted to understand more fully the needs of women and girls in their region. In 2004 they commissioned a study on the status of women and girls in the five-county area. The report, “Voices Heard: Women and Girls Speak,” influenced grantmaking. Courtenay says, “As a result of the study, we were able to prioritize our initiatives as well as address critical needs of the community and begin moving toward awarding grants that created systemic change, addressing the underlying issues.”

According to Ann and Courtenay, *collaboration* has been pivotal to the Alliance’s success. Courtenay says, “One of the Alliance’s guiding principles is ‘*Collaborate* with funding partners and community organizations to empower women and girls.’ The Research Report included six funding partners and in subsequent years, foundations and individuals have frequently participated in Alliance grants.” The founders believe that the Alliance’s thorough research has gained the community’s respect and will attract future funding partners.

Courtenay and Ann regard themselves as professional volunteers and are passing their philanthropic values to their children. Courtenay says that her two sons have just graduated from college and “...knowing what I’ve done with my life, I fully expect volunteering will be part of their lives.” Ann has four children. One daughter serves on the Alliance steering committee and Ann says she loves it. “I know they certainly understand philanthropy is their responsibility and they will give back.”

**BUFFY BEAUDOIN-SCHWARTZ,  
WOMEN'S GIVING CIRCLE OF HOWARD  
COUNTY, HOWARD COUNTY, MD (2000)**

"I had no idea when I helped start giving circles in the greater Baltimore Area that they would grow to the extent they have. And I feel fortunate to have played some role in this trend. I didn't have a sense of how big the giving circle movement would be, at least at the beginning. But once I saw the excitement and energy around coming together for greater impact, I knew that giving circles would have a significant impact on philanthropy in our region and across the country."

When Buffy became director of the Baltimore Giving Project (BGP) in 1999, she talked with colleagues across the country regarding giving trends. She was looking for ways to promote philanthropy. After hearing about young professionals on the west coast who were pooling their dollars and reading Shaw-Hardy's *Creating a Women's Giving Circle*,<sup>16</sup> Buffy and the BGP decided to bring the concepts to the Baltimore area.

In 2000, Buffy helped found the first of several giving circles in her region, the Women's Giving Circle of Howard County (WGC), a donor advised fund at the Columbia Foundation. She currently serves as chair of the 600 member circle. "I saw the potential, the excitement, and the opportunity and certainly on a personal level wanted to be involved as well."

Buffy remembers the first days of the nascent circle. "I was very excited about the notion of women pooling their dollars and leveraging them for greater impact. To be in a room with other women who believed the same way I do about certain issues and to catch those same feelings of synergy and empowerment is incredibly appealing. I still get those same feelings today in a roomful of women who are pooling their dollars for *change* and it's something I will always want to be involved with."

As a founding WGC member Buffy helped determine the giving circle's focus on supporting women and girls and their economic independence. "I grew up with very strong

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"I believe giving circles can be an entry point to understanding what's happening in communities and with philanthropy."

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– Buffy Beaudoin-Schwartz

grandmothers, great grandmothers, and a very strong mother as well. They are and were amazing women who worked outside the home because they needed and wanted to."

She continues, "My grandmother, a single mother of four, was employed by the social security administration. My great-grandmother worked for the telephone company. I'm not sure I understood how unusual that was, but I do now. I am fortunate to know about and learn from the strength of my mother

and my grandmothers as they managed their lives, as strong and *courageous* women. As a result of growing up with these strong women, I guess I have always wanted to support women in meaningful ways."

In addition to her family background, Buffy had two touchstone moments that influenced her focus on women and children – both involving the media. "Abuse in any form is an issue that bothers me greatly and I remember being at my parent's house in Connecticut right after my first child was born in 1992 and seeing a television program on the conditions of children living in some Romanian orphanages and I was horrified."

The other media moment was a newspaper story about two teenage boys in England who abducted a toddler in a mall and murdered him. "I was so totally affected by these stories. I knew I wanted to do something in my life, in my own way, to make a difference," she says.

Because of her current position as Communications Director at the Association of Baltimore Area Grantmakers (ABAG), Buffy says she is able to, "...not only help increase the number of giving circles, but also assist them expand in strength, sustainability and impact." Giving circles in the Baltimore/Washington corridor have experienced growth through her efforts. In the last eight years the number of new or further engaged giving circle members has grown to 5,000 with more than ten million pledged and collected dollars.

As to the future of giving circles from her Gen X perspective, Buffy believes that for women with limited amounts of disposable time and money, giving with other

women and their children may be very appealing. “I think and hope giving circles will be important to women who are looking to be involved in the community and who are seeking learning opportunities for their children about giving,” she says. “If one is looking for ways to involve their kids in the community, leverage their dollars, meet new people and socialize with those of a like mind, giving circles can provide that opportunity.”

One can only speculate that with Buffy’s past record, her abilities, and her *courage*, she will continue to nurture and grow giving circles.

**WENDY HERMANN STEELE (FORMERLY WENDY HERMANN HUSHAK), IMPACT 100, CINCINNATI, OH (2001)**

“On a warm Saturday in the summer of 2001, I sat with my kids on the floor of our Northern Michigan cottage to address a problem – what to do to get women to be more philanthropic. The result a few months later was Impact 100.” As a private banker in Cincinnati, Ohio, Wendy was concerned that as she got involved in causes she cared about and talked to her women friends about supporting these causes, she was repeatedly told, “my husband wouldn’t allow this,” or “my job won’t let me get away.” “These were bright and talented women who couldn’t participate in a mainstream way and weren’t involved, in part based on circumstances they imposed on themselves,” she says.

Wendy characteristically searches for solutions to problems so she started thinking about how to intentionally mobilize women to give money. On that Saturday in 2001, she and her kids took pieces of notebook paper and sat around thinking about how to solve the problem. They wrote down ways to engage women and educate them about giving money. Then they analyzed the pros and cons of each way. From that exercise Wendy created Impact 100 which has since allocated more than \$1.5 million in 12 grants and spawned numerous other Impact circles around the country.

The only person other than her children to whom she talked about her idea was her father who, because Wendy’s mother died when she was young, has always been her advisor. “He played the devil’s advocate and came up with all the reasons why this wouldn’t work,” she explains. “But he has since said, ‘Thank goodness you didn’t take my advice.’”

The questions he raised really helped me solidify my ‘Eureka’ moment and I knew my idea was right and that women hadn’t been able to participate in philanthropy because our culture and circumstances impacted our giving patterns,” she reflects.

While establishing Impact, Wendy reviewed the ways women in her church were raising money for ongoing operations and capital improvements. “They were doing it through bake sales and rummage sales,” she says. When men raised money at the church, they called their buddies and raised \$45,000 compared to the women’s \$7,000. “It never occurred to the women to write a check because that wasn’t their mindset. I wanted to empower women to feel they can write a check and it feels good and they would get as many rewards as having a rummage sale.”

Wendy’s concept was to find 100 women who would each give \$1,000 for a total of \$100,000. “I felt that as generous as Cincinnati is, if I couldn’t find 100 women to do this, then maybe the concept was flawed.”

Wendy talked to 15 friends about the concept. “Then September 11<sup>th</sup> happened and everybody took a deep breath and said, ‘Let’s heal.’ By November we said if not now, we don’t know when. So I had a dinner meeting to decide the details and choose a name. We applied for our 501(c)3 status and received it the following March. By May we had 123 members and awarded our first grant of \$123,000 in December 2002.”

Part of Impact 100’s success is that Wendy specifically sought women of different ages, skills, race, neighborhoods, and faith. “I didn’t want everyone to look the same,” she says. “And I knew that this cannot be about me. Each woman has to feel she owns it. I wanted everyone to feel as passionate about the concept as I did.”

The Impact 100 journey enabled Wendy to connect on a personal level, too. In January 2003 following her divorce, Wendy’s high school boyfriend, Rick Steele, picked up a copy of *People*<sup>17</sup> which featured an article and photo about Wendy and Impact 100. “Rick tracked me down and called me. We hadn’t spoken in 23 years but the minute I heard his voice, I knew who it was. It was amazing and a bit scary,” she remembers. “But it definitely was Impact that brought us back together.”

Wendy and Rick married in 2005 and now live in Traverse City, Michigan with their combined families. Wendy's current job is CEO of Tape Wrangler, a start-up company selling the couple's invention, a family of specialty tape dispensers.

As for her future with Impact 100, Wendy reports that she is still a member of the Cincinnati group and speaks about the Impact model around the country. "I am still passionate about the concept because I've seen the ripple effect happen. Women who were never philanthropists before are giving and giving more. Often when a proposal doesn't get funded, some of the committee members have gone out and obtained funding on their own. In fact, some members have left Impact to get more personally involved with a grantee organization. I will continue to support Impact and women's philanthropy no matter where I am," she pledges.

**REBECCA POWERS, IMPACT AUSTIN, AUSTIN, TX (2003)**

**"Impact Austin (IA) was not part of my life plan, but it is clearly part of my destiny."**

Rebecca Powers says she sincerely believes creating Impact Austin was her calling and a transformative experience. "I know that in hindsight, everything in my life has prepared me for this."

She did not easily reach this conclusion because Impact Austin was born out of tragedy. In January 2003, she was flying home after visiting her dying brother. She knew she would never see him again. She had purchased *People*<sup>18</sup> at the airport and read the article on the plane about Impact 100 in Cincinnati. "I didn't even get through the whole article when I began crying. It seemed like such a good idea but I thought I don't even know 100 women in Austin. I'm not even from Austin."

The idea continued to percolate in her mind even though she believed she was only Rebecca Powers who moved to Austin when her husband was transferred and active only in

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**"Because everyone gives the same amount, we have an even playing field that includes women in the workforce and women who stay at home. No voice is louder than the other."**

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– Rebecca Powers

her church and her children's schools. "Nobody knew who I was," she says.

Nevertheless, at her next neighborhood Bible study group, Rebecca talked about Impact 100. In a week's time, two women she didn't know that well gave her checks and told her they would help her organize a similar group in Austin. When the three of them and three others met, they sat around a table and, as at a potluck, recognized each brought a different skill to the table. They drew up a business plan that they knew

women would be comfortable with and accept. "These were women like me – living in Austin, but not really *connected* to the community – except to their churches and kids' schools," she says. "I'm their 'poster child.'"

"The six of us didn't even know much about each other," she recalls, "and neither did we know any naysayers or consultants who would tell us this wouldn't work. We didn't even have any women with 'big Austin names' involved" which may explain their tag line "Ordinary women... extraordinary impact."

Rebecca says, "Sometimes I think I'm in a different body than I was. When we first started, somebody asked me, 'why you and why now,' as if maybe I didn't think anybody else was doing it right. I'd tell them that my brother died and this was all about healing a hole in my heart." She believes that her brother was the impetus for Impact Austin and if she had read that article about the Cincinnati Impact 100 at any other time, she'd have thought good for them and nothing else.

After the group's first meeting, Rebecca called Wendy (the woman pictured in *People* she had read on the plane). "I wanted to find out how to best organize our group. But Wendy told me we had to do it ourselves. That was the greatest gift of all. What I realize in hindsight was that we understand our bylaws and know everything about our organization because we had to *create* it ourselves. And when people ask us why we did it this or that way, we tell them it's because it works for the organization we formed in Austin, Texas."

Rebecca had worked as an independent kitchen consultant for a company that did home parties. She and her new friends used the “home party” model to build their membership. The six founding members said they would each invite four friends to a coffee. Rebecca remembers, “We called it a coffee but served only wine.”

The founders were not sure that all of the 24 women at the first party could write \$1,000 checks. Rebecca told Impact’s story. “We said we had put our business heads together and this was our business model. We’re ready to go. We’re going to try it on you.” And she reveals, “23 women that night paid or committed to pay. We walked in with \$6,000 and we walked out with \$30,000.”

As thrilling as that night was, Rebecca knew they had to use the same “home party” approach to further their membership. She told the 23 women that the only way Impact Austin could be successful was for them to go home and invite ten of their friends to a “coffee,” and she would come and tell the story.

Rebecca speaks at about 30 coffees each fall using the networking strategy. “Our goal was to grow to 500 members in five years, so every year we’ve added 100 women,” she explains.

It never occurred to Rebecca that they would fail. “Nobody knew us and we knew if we failed early on, we wouldn’t have a second chance. My goal was to put three years of grantmaking together and at that point I believed we would earn the respect of the community and the right to be a player. But you know we’re still kind of the ‘big elephant in the room.’ The other funders don’t really know what to think of us. Not many foundations allocate \$100,000 grants and that’s where our niche is.”

Impact Austin’s mission of bringing new resources to the community includes teaching the art and importance of giving to the next generation of women. Rebecca is particularly proud that in 2006 her daughter Claire started a giving circle at her high school, “Girls Giving Grants.” Rebecca explains that it is similar to the Impact Austin model. Each girl gives \$100. The first year 21 girls gave \$2,100. By 2008, 57 members awarded \$5,700.

Rebecca was so successful organizing Impact Austin that

three men in the community approached her about running a similar organization for them. But she says she has learned a great deal from being part of Impact Austin and one of the important lessons is that “...women give differently than men. These men just wanted to find 100 guys to give \$1,000 and then Impact Austin would run it. They live in a different world, there’s nothing wrong with that, they just don’t want to do the *collaborative* piece, the *connecting*, and all the rest of the six C’s.”

Now that their five-year goal has been met, Rebecca has had time to sit back and think about what lies ahead for her. She says, “I think there is something bigger out there. And Impact Austin is preparing me for something around the corner that I can’t see yet. I’ll know what it is when it happens, and I won’t care what it is. I just know it will be helping women see how they can make a difference.”

**MARSHA WALLACE, DINING FOR WOMEN,  
GREENVILLE, SC (2003)**

“With Dining for Women, I had a new feeling. I created something. I have a strong *commitment* to it and I am so proud to be part of this movement. But right now I feel that I am more a steward of the idea than the owner.”

When Marsha was in college she became pregnant. “When I became pregnant I decided to get married because I wanted to be a stay-at-home mom.” However, her husband was abusive and an alcoholic and they soon divorced. “I knew then that I had to be self sufficient and independent.”

With a toddler to support, she completed college and became an obstetrics nurse. But Marsha believes that being a young mother married to an abusive husband gave her a kinship with women everywhere who have experienced domestic violence. “Domestic violence is so prevalent in the emerging world and what I experienced was only a tiny fraction of what women in developing countries endure. On some level at that time, I made a *connection* with other women who want to feel they are whole people, capable and competent with dignity and self-responsibility,” she says.

Fast forward thirty years and even though she now had a wonderful family and husband Jim, “I’m so crazy about my husband, he’s a saint and my rock,” Marsha grew

restless. Contrary to her earlier attitudes about stay-at-home moms, she was now struggling against that and looking for something to do.

Jim has a successful medical practice in Greenville and she says she didn't really need to work, but believed that if she didn't have a paying job, she had less influence in the family. "I wanted to find something meaningful but figured it had to be extremely lucrative to go through all the stress of a job. I was actively and prayerfully searching for my life's work and struggling and searching to find my place as a contributor to this world. Then I had an experience that impacted me more than anything else and changed my life completely."

Two events led up to this experience. In 2002, Marsha read an article about some social workers who got together periodically for a potluck dinner and put their money in a basket instead of paying a restaurant tab. They used this money to help people in their community. This resonated with Marsha and she kept thinking about it.

Then she met a woman from Ethiopia who was her husband's patient. "She told me what conditions were like in Ethiopia and that she was going back to help her people. Her story was so compelling that I wrote her a check right then and there. When she came back to the States she told me exactly what she had done with the money and I was astounded by how good it felt to have a tangible *connection* to my gift and to know how it was spent. My friend had bought grain for a farmer who had walked for days with his family after having to leave his land due to drought. The family was starving."

She continued, "One day I was meditating and a physical sensation came over me. I remembered that article and the Ethiopian woman and I knew what I would do. My birthday was coming up and I decided I would invite some friends to a potluck dinner at my house and ask them to contribute the money they would have spent at a restaurant that evening to help women in poverty internationally."

Around that time, Marsha saw a segment on Oprah about an organization called Women for Women International and decided the money from her first dinner would go to that organization to help women who were survivors of war.

Her idea was a success. The first potluck in January 2003 raised \$760 from 25 friends and Dining for Women was born. Although she claims to be more spiritual than religious, Marsha says, "I believe there just had to be divine intervention along the way. Things that seemed like coincidences could not have been. I believe we are placed on earth for a purpose and I feel a huge sense of responsibility to shepherd this effort to reach its full potential."

When she first began Dining for Women, Marsha had no idea how successful and big it would become. "There was a time when I wasn't so sure it would even continue," she says. In 2004, with their 501(c)3 status in place and the one Greenville chapter, she asked her friends to contact their friends in other places about starting other chapters. But nothing happened. Then, Dining for Women was featured in the 2005 New Ventures in Philanthropy study on giving circles and the media began calling her. The next breakthrough was the December 2005 *Women's Day*<sup>19</sup> article. Chapters tripled overnight when Marsha appeared on *Today*, April 28, 2007. "This idea just resonates with people," she exclaims. There are now 130 chapters in 37 states, more than 3,000 members, and we have just completed our first national conference."

Marsha explains why Dining for Women members contribute internationally rather than locally. "Most of the members of Dining for Women are already giving in their communities and are just diversifying their philanthropy." Her passion has always been to *create change* and empower women living in extreme poverty, no matter where they are.

What lies in the future for this dynamic woman and her 'fifth child,' Dining for Women? "I'll probably be doing this for the rest of my life," she says. But she does dream of the day when she and Jim can take their medical skills and travel together to Ethiopia.

LEE ROPER-BATKER, WOMEN'S FOUNDATION OF MINNESOTA, MINNEAPOLIS, MN (2004)

"The Women's Foundation of Minnesota was one of the few early women's funds in the country to have a vision of an endowed fund. At the time (1984), the Foundation's endowment campaign was jump started with a million dollar

gift from Mary Lee Dayton. In fact, she was the first woman in the world to give a gift of that size to a women's fund. Truly, hers was an act of *courage*. And now, in our current \$15 million campaign, we have four courageous women who are each giving a million dollars."

Women's Foundation of Minnesota President and CEO Lee Roper-Batker is an example of the *courage* women are displaying today. She says, "I started at the Women's Foundation in 2000. Then, I never thought we'd be discussing million dollar gifts with women today. But now, it just seems natural. Because if we're talking about social *change* and *creating* a world for future generations, we have to align our resources with that vision."

She continues, "I have no fear or qualms whatsoever about talking and pushing people—whether it's asking for \$100 or \$1 million, the questions are: "What is your vision for the world? What are your hopes and dreams for women and girls? And, how do you align that overall vision with your giving?"

Lee says that women are now being asked for larger gifts. "I can't tell you how many women I've met with who tell me that the Women's Foundation was the first organization that had ever asked them for a five-figure gift – and how many women simply never saw themselves as philanthropists."

In their current \$15 million campaign, Lee says she now asks those same women for six-figure gifts and received one recently. But after pledging it, the donor explained that the Foundation would have to wait until after her husband died for a seven-figure gift.

"The truth is many women still aren't making larger gifts in the ways, for example, their husbands have to alms, arts organizations, or to the status institutions in the community," she says.

Under Lee's direction, the Women's Foundation of Minnesota has established three women's giving circles in the last five years. She says, "A giving circle offers the opportunity for women to get together – women who are used to acting as nurturers and sharing with those in need. Giving circles are not only a strategy to promote and build women's philanthropy, but also a vehicle to educate women about community needs."

Lee suggests we redefine and expand the image of a philanthropist to understand it can be and is so much more than wealthy, white men – more than the Warren Buffetts or Bill Gates of the world. Women of color, in particular, who are often viewed as the recipients of philanthropy, can be and are philanthropists, as well.

The first Women's Foundation giving circle was the Hmong Women's Giving Circle (HWGC), launched in 2004 by Hmong staff at the Foundation. "The goal was to lift up the contributions of Hmong women, many of whom were new immigrants – to help these women stand up and live in this new culture and understand the role and power of philanthropy, and how to use it. This took a combination of *courage*, leadership, and sheer tenacity. By joining forces, raising money together, and directing that money to the issues most important to them, they have been filled with a sense of accomplishment, pride, and power," Lee says. In 2006, the giving circle spun off from the Women's Foundation and became a donor advised fund of Asian American/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy.

The HWGC success inspired two African American board members of the Women's Foundation to launch the Women of African Descent Women's Giving Circle (WADGC) in 2005 – the first in the state. By December 2007, WADGC had raised \$10,000 in funding to advance equality for black women through education.

The success and visibility of the Foundation's two giving circles caught the attention of Women of Influence (WIN), a social networking group of Twin Cities' businesswomen. From its 2001 launch to 2006, WIN evolved steadily from a golf and wine tasting social club to one with a more charitable focus. "In 2007, they decided to network with a purpose and formed the Women of Influence Giving Circle with economics as the key focus. They're all women in corporate America who believe strongly that as they become more successful financially, they want to give back to ensure that all women can become financially successful."

WIN Giving Circle members have benefitted from a year of educational and capacity-building workshops organized by the Women's Foundation. "We've convened meetings

between our grantees and WIN and helped them write their first Request for Proposals. They're using their resources to help improve girls' and women's lives," Lee reports.

As to what lies ahead with the Women's Foundation and giving circles, Lee reports she has had a call from another board member interested in beginning a Latina women's giving circle.

"What's perhaps most challenging is to balance our capacity to staff the giving circles – they are particularly time-intensive in the first six months. In this tough economy, we must be realistic about the cost versus benefit to the Women's Foundation. Presently, we are looking at how administrative fees might help us to more cost-effectively support giving circles."

Attributing her interest in working with women and girls to the fact that she had feminist parents - her father in particular - Lee says, "When I was a little girl, he told me that people would treat me differently because I was a girl, but that I should know I could do and be anything I wanted to be, no matter what. He also reminded me that I was privileged – my dad is a Lutheran minister - and it was my responsibility to give back and ensure that all people had the same equality and opportunity. He pounded that message into me for all those formative years, so what else could I do?"

Lee believes that it is important for girls to hear those key messages from their parents or caring adults in their lives. "It surely had a large impact in my life. I mean, I always knew I'd end up in a career working to advance social change and justice. And being a woman, it's wonderful to step into a career where you can speak with authority about the *changes* you want to see *created*," she says.

**LYNN MCNAIR, AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN'S GIVING CIRCLE, WASHINGTON AREA WOMEN'S FOUNDATION, WASHINGTON, DC (2006)**

**"I guess we're rather amorphous and don't fit any mold. We meet at one another's home and don't just read the applications, but think of them as born out of our own**

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**"Our circle has had a profound experience on the way I regard women and my heritage."**

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– Lynn McNair

**experiences as women – as African American women."**

Growing up in Coleman's Corner on Maryland's Eastern Shore, Lynn McNair, whose academic credentials include the Université d'Aix-Marseille and an M.S. in Foreign Service/International Affairs from Georgetown University, attended a segregated school until she was in the fourth grade. "Before we went to

the integrated school, my teacher and mentor, Mrs. Dorsey, prepped us on how to behave and told us what we could and couldn't do." Mrs. Dorsey, a strong influence in Lynn's life, encouraged her to tackle projects that she didn't think she could do such as study French in fourth grade.

When Anne Mosle, Executive Director of the Washington Area Women's Foundation (WAWF), urged Lynn to start something 'big' at the WAWF, Lynn and two other board members, Jane Fox-Johnson and Ruth Goins, decided to create a giving circle to help African American women and girls. They had heard about giving circles through their work on the WAWF Board as well as from their broader involvement in philanthropy.

She calls the African American Women's Giving Circle (AAWGC) a spiritual sisterhood. "I'm very business-oriented and the way we came together was a little foreign to me. We always start by sitting in a circle and sharing something spiritual. I had to go through the process of stepping back and talking about my African American background and calling out my ancestors. It was all very personal and private but now I love it. It has been a transformative experience."

The women in the circle concentrate their grantmaking on 'place' and 'placed-based' giving – finding a 'place' in their community where they can give and then becoming directly involved. They settled on Ward 8 in southeast Washington, DC. "We wanted to dig a little deeper and really put in our tentacles so that it was more than just making a grant," Lynn says. The women volunteer in the community as well as make grants. They call it "deliberative involvement."

Jane Fox-Johnson, another of the founding members, said that she has gained collective wisdom and generational

learning from the circle as well as a respect for the traditions and symbolism that come from African American women's shared history. "The circle has helped me gain a deeper belief in our cultural wisdom and approaches to solving problems with specific cultures and races. I love it that we influenced people's opinions about what a group of powerful black women can do," she says.

Lynn says that *creating* the circle was not always easy. "Some of the issues we had to deal with included whether we should only give to African American organizations and whether they had to be led by an African American woman. This created some tension but we worked through it by having a facilitated retreat." Lynn treasures her ability to help work through problems like those the circle experienced and to build bridges. "I've built bridges in part based on race, in my work, and by personally helping people create partnerships to strengthen ties to a community or a group."

Bridge building is a trait that runs in her family. Lynn's father was a bridge builder, both literally and figuratively. "I grew up in a very loving household with two parents and six siblings. My mother was a domestic and my father a construction worker who served as foreman on construction sites, including those involving building bridges. But he also built them in the community. He was pretty liberal and we had a household filled with people from all over the world and from many walks of life. My father was by far one of the most accepting of people and their differences, something he taught us to value."

These childhood experiences may account for Lynn's focusing on the world beyond Coleman's Corner, Washington DC, and even beyond the United States. Her current position is Vice President for Development of the Salzburg Global Seminar, an international center committed to involving the world's leaders in the search for solutions to global problems.

As to her future plans, the status of African American boys worries Lynn. "I see more progress with girls than boys," she says. "My objective is to push the boys. There are enormous societal issues for young African American males. They have three choices about how to address them: they can fall back on their race, rise above it, or figure out how to navigate the system to survive. But every African American boy has to deal with it and their parents have to help them

navigate through with their understanding of the minefields."

She relates an incident when her 16 year old son had a job walking his godparent's dog at 6 am and would inevitably be stopped by the police. "It's different for girls because they're not considered a threat," she says. But she hopes having an African American president will dispel some of the concerns and stereotypes that people have about African American boys.

Lynn is an enthusiastic supporter of the Washington Area Women's Foundation in part because she appreciates its diversity of age and race. "The WAWF does a phenomenal job of creating an absolutely great melting pot as well as visions that are not all the same. It's a multi-generational mix of different cultures," she says.

Lynn McNair was elected Junior Miss of her county and first runner up in the state at a time when race was a hotly contested issue in Maryland. She was not able to find a hotel to stay in for the state pageant. But for all that, she wears her age, race, and gender gently but proudly and plans to keep building bridges for a long, long time.

**HALI LEE, ASIAN WOMEN'S GIVING CIRCLE,  
NEW YORK CITY, NY (2005)**

**"Many women come to us not knowing much about philanthropy, not having been that purposeful about where they're giving their money. Perhaps they've responded to an appealing solicitation in the mail, or given to their alma mater. With us, for the first time, these women are deciding to focus their charitable giving on New York City – on women and girls, social justice, and activism."**

Hali put a different twist on the Korean word *geh* – a shared savings circle – when she founded the Asian Women's Giving Circle (AWGC). "When I was growing up in Kansas City, my Mom and Dad were part of a *geh*. They would meet with their friends once a month and everyone would put something like \$1,000 into a pot. Then in ten months when it was your turn, you would take home \$10,000. They used it like a bank and it paid for tuition or other looming bills. It was a combination bank and social time to eat, drink, party, and get to see friends," she says.

Building on that concept, Hali started a fun "shopping"

*geh* with her friends. “This was a rather frivolous idea where we would put in a couple hundred dollars and take the money home at the end of our month to buy clothes or a computer or a birthday present,” she adds. “But in 2005, I decided to make our *geh* philanthropic.”

Hali asked thirty people who were, as she puts it “one or two degrees separated from me” over to a friend’s home in Manhattan. Ten came. At the meeting the women discussed what their focus would be and decided on arts and activism because “We all agreed we wanted to fund Asian American women doing social justice work in New York. We also realized that many of us had secret lives as artists,” she says.

The group was also aware of the lack of funding for Asian Americans and wanted to find their special niche. “Even though Asian Americans represent 12 percent of the population of New York City, we receive less than one percent of foundation dollars,” Hali says.

The niche they found is funding for Asian American girls and women who use the arts to further social justice. They also decided they didn’t want to be ethnic specific—the grantees just had to be within the Asian American communities and they wanted ethnic diversity among members as well. Members are from Bengali, Chinese, Indian, Korean, Japanese, Pacific Islander, Filipino, and Vietnamese backgrounds. Grantee organizations are similarly diverse.

Every woman is asked to try to raise \$2,500 annually because, Hali says, “It is important that the women who come through my Circle have the experience of writing a personal check AND raising money by asking their friends, family, and colleagues. This is great training for future board work...that way we’re not only raising money, we’re raising philanthropists.”

Hali, former Development Director for Manhattan Country School, admits that the Circle has a high bar for fundraising and some members don’t quite make it while others raise more. “But the important thing is that everyone tries. No one is excluded from voting because she didn’t raise \$2,500. Everyone gets one vote.” Because of her fundraising background, Hali is able to provide help with writing fundraising appeals and has developed training packets for the members.

Social justice has always been important to Hali. She credits her parents with their support of anything she and her brother wanted to do and providing both with a quality education at Princeton and Columbia Universities. “We were incredibly privileged because of our parents’ love and support. Unlike many parents who want their children to be doctors, ours wanted us to do what made us happy.”

Hali loves and is proud of AWGC. “I have deep affection for the women in the circle and really look forward to our meetings in restaurants or at each others’ homes and workplaces. We want to keep it fun – to be social. Many are young and corporate and know little about the philanthropic world. I call them my philanthropy virgins. I really like that piece of it – the mentoring piece – helping young women become aware of and take *control* of their philanthropy.”

ROSIE MOLINARY, CIRCLE DE LUZ, DAVIDSON, NC (2008)

“And so it is only fitting, that when the news of the day is not good, when it steals our breath like a dimming force – that we issue the call to the *circle*, that we return to the space that holds, heals, and helps – and that we use that space as a tool to *change the news*.”

As a Latina in Columbia, South Carolina, Rosie experienced the conflicting realities between the Hispanic culture and mainstream America regarding ethnic identities, body image, and beauty perceptions. “At home, Latinas were often expected to be more demure, more feminine, and less sexual. In the outside world, we believed we were primarily seen in a sexual light in contrast to the more virginal lens inside our homes,” she says.

In 2007, Rosie published *Hijas Americanas: Body Image, and Growing up Latina*<sup>20</sup>, a book in which she explores what it means to be beautiful in America and how Latina women handle the duality of their experiences. *Hijas* is not only about “...the outside job the world is willing to do on us – all of us – if we’re not vigilant, but the inside job we do on ourselves by subscribing to beliefs that aren’t authentically ours.”

She says, “For years, pop culture has insisted that beautiful women are tall, thin, and blonde. But what happens if your mirror reflects olive skin, raven hair, and a short build?” Combining her own experiences with the

voices of five hundred other women, *Hijas* tells how the women navigated issues of gender, image, and sexuality and the totality of being a Latina woman in the United States.

“I wanted to help Latinas reconcile the different messages they receive to become themselves, to empower them to individually find their voices. To find out how we all, despite whatever lens we look through – be it race or where we grew up – have commonalities and how these can be used to come together to find the strength to pursue our lives to the fullest,” she says.

In high school, her family was “significantly less wealthy than my peers. I was not allowed to do the sorts of things that might be described as typical things for teenagers. My parents wanted me home a lot.” But that didn’t hold Rosie back; she became president of her 3,000 student high school. Rosie’s high school was half black and half white with very few Latinas. “In some ways not fitting in has been one the great gifts of my life as it has allowed me to find the common place I have with each person. I am usually comfortable anywhere I am.”

Following graduation from college, Rosie taught high school for three years in Charlotte and subsequently received a master’s in creative writing from Goddard College in Vermont. When she started research for *Hijas Americanas*, Rosie was reminded of the significant challenges young Latinas face. Especially troubling to her were their dramatic drop out rates and low matriculation into higher education.

“As an educator and writer who often focuses on social justice and philanthropy issues, I witnessed firsthand the power of education in the development of a girl’s self-confidence. I have seen what happens when a young person becomes lit from within with the recognition of her own possibility and power. And I have seen what it is like to not have that light. Not having that light can stunt a life,” she says.

The idea for Circle de Luz (Circle of Light) emerged when Rosie was touring for *Hijas Americanas*. “It was a watershed moment when a teacher asked if I could have lunch with some sixth grade Latina students. Every one of those girls wanted to go to college; they had dreams and hopes. But I knew that in the next handful of years, life might try to interfere. They would fall in love for the first time and wonder if that’s all that mattered. They would start

thinking about the cost of college and wonder if it was really worth it,” she explains.

On the way home that afternoon, Rosie asked herself what she could do to fulfill their dreams. Then she remembered the women she had met while on tour, women who wanted to help and positively affect young Latina lives.

“I researched what was out there and ultimately focused on one of the hot trends in philanthropy-giving circles. Over the course of that year I met with a group of diverse women of all ages, races, ethnicities, and socioeconomic backgrounds to form Circle de Luz to empower young women to achieve their dreams,” she says. “The meetings were a synergistic blending of all our experiences into the solution that became Circle de Luz.”

“We knew that each year we wanted to increase the number of Latinas in high school who go to college. We also knew we had to provide the motivation and inspiration before they were in high school. The consensus was to identify the girls in 7th grade, before boys, clothes, hair, and body completely dominated their lives,” she recalls.

Rosie wanted the contributions to be affordable and surveyed people she met when she was on the book tour. She also conducted two focus groups. “That gave us our model of a \$90 annual pledge for six years,” she says. “Each donor is a M’ija, a girlfriend, and can hail from anywhere in the United States, be any age, and be from any background.”

In 2008, Circle de Luz received its 501(c)3 status, held its first board meeting, and awarded scholarships to eight Latina girls who will each receive a minimum of \$5,000 when they graduate from high school. A companion circle, Circle de Posibilidad, provides funding for programming and support to the scholarship recipients until high school graduation.

Circle de Luz donors range in age from 25 to 65. Rosie uses the internet extensively to communicate and *connect* with them. And where will this *change*-making woman be in three years? “I would love to have Circle de Luz all over the United States and the concept be something that many women of all ethnicities and ages gravitate towards as a giving option,” she concludes.

# Founders' Tips for Organizing, Recruiting, and Retaining Members

During the interviews founders shared their perspectives on three areas key to giving circle operations: organization, recruitment, and retention.

## ORGANIZING THE CIRCLE

- Generally one person has an idea and becomes a passionate advocate and evangelist.
- Start with a small committee to get the circle underway and understand that it can take time to get established. This is time well spent!
- The organizing team should include women with different backgrounds, skills, and networks to bring the broadest diversity, experience, and knowledge to the table.
- The team should clearly identify their mission and always center programming and grantmaking around it.
- As the circle matures, leaders and members should be receptive to new ideas, open to change, and flexible.

## RECRUITING MEMBERS

- Personal contact is an effective way to begin a circle. One-on-one small coffees or large gatherings with follow-up by a member work.
- Many of the circles have a kickoff with a keynote speaker. This is followed by individual membership approaches after the event to those who attended. Some ask attendees to sign up at the event.
- *Connect* the prospect to the grantees with on-site visits to grantee organizations and follow the visit with a social event.
- Social gatherings including coffees, lunches, dinners or wine and cheese at people's homes are popular.

- Programming at events often includes *connecting* the prospect to the mission, emphasizing that there are solutions to problems. Grantee stories are effective.
- Circle participation should be fun and have a social as well as an educational component. Some suggest the networking aspect of a circle appeals to professional women.

## RETAINING MEMBERS

- As the circles grow and mature, many of the same tools used in recruitment are used to retain members.
- Maintaining *connection* and involvement are keys to member retention.
- Being part of the grantmaking process is key to retaining members as it *connects* the members to the mission, the issues, and one another.
- Educational programming is most often associated with the circle's mission as well as women's philanthropy. Some circles focus on financial education; others include programs about building legacies and "Next Gen" philanthropy.
- Many circles have only a grant process and an annual event announcing the awards. But all stay *connected* to their members through newsletters, the internet, or personal contact.

# A Vision for the Future

After a decade of personal involvement with giving circles, I am very proud to be part of this movement. It seemed like such a good idea in 1998 when I first read the article in *People*. I have watched with great joy as the concept resonated with tens of thousands of women across the nation.

It delights me to see women understand for the first time what being a philanthropist means – what women can do personally to not only make others' lives better, but to give meaning to their own lives as well. They recognize their responsibility to make the world a better place, to repay those who worked hard to enable women in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to be the best educated and most affluent of any women in history.

Giving circles help women become more financially literate and aware of community needs. Giving circles represent a new way to encourage giving and, as such, are important to philanthropy. In the next 10 years I think we will see:

- **More Giving Circles** Women will continue to *create* giving circles as a means to *connect* to one another and to their communities and a way to leverage their contributions for more impact.
- **More and Larger Contributions**  
“...given enough time, giving circles do influence members to give more.”<sup>21</sup> –ANGELA EIKENBERRY  
Eikenberry's research focuses on donors' philanthropic and civic behaviors and concludes there is a definite correlation between participation in giving circles and members becoming more philanthropic.
- **More Impactful and Transformational Philanthropy**  
“I feel our giving circle is creating philanthropists. We have all been busy being charitable and giving immediate

assistance. But being a philanthropist has a long term benefit. It is changing lives permanently.” –ANN BAKER, THE WOMEN'S GIVING ALLIANCE

“Our circle has encouraged more African American women to give and to make impactful gifts.” –JANE FOX-JOHNSON, AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN'S GIVING CIRCLE, WASHINGTON AREA WOMEN'S FOUNDATION

Giving circles are creating knowledgeable donors. Women increasingly demand to know how their gifts are being used and what their impact is.

- **More Diversity Among Giving Circle Members**  
“Our giving circle has gotten stronger but the people we thought would be involved are not those running it. Our reach has extended throughout the community and and I'm so impressed by the caliber of those involved.” –ANN BAKER, THE WOMEN'S GIVING ALLIANCE  
More corporate women are becoming involved as are members' daughters and granddaughters. Giving circles are attracting women from all ages, races, and cultures.
- **New Iterations of Giving Circles Using Technology to Further Global Giving**  
Women will find creative ways to use the internet to communicate with one another nationally and globally.
- **More Creativity and New, Innovative Models as Women Continue to Seek New Ways to Solve Old Problems**

Women's giving circles have *created change* over the last twenty years – change in the way women approach philanthropy and change in the world around them. Women found a secret to changing the world by giving together. They unleashed their transformative power and created new ways of giving and new solutions to old problems. By *connecting* with one another, they became serious and thoughtful philanthropists who *collaborated* to assume responsibility to leave the world a better place. They remain *committed* to their causes. May they continue to use the *control* they have of their lives to *confidently* and *courageously* go forward with their philanthropy. And together we *celebrate* their entrepreneurial and dynamic leadership.

# Discussion Questions

The questions below may help individuals who are thinking about starting a giving circle, who are part of a giving circle that is transitioning into another phase, and those who want to learn more about women's philanthropy.

1. What motivated the founders to begin a giving circle?
2. Compare and contrast the leadership styles of the women who founded the giving circles represented in this narrative.
3. What skills were most important to the women who founded the giving circles?
4. Many of those interviewed said they did not just want to give money, they wanted to become involved. How important is involvement to members' education and sustained interest?
5. How do giving circles expand philanthropy?
6. How are giving circles entrepreneurial?
7. What evidence have you found that the three new "C's" for the 21st century (control, confidence, and courage) encourage women's philanthropic activity?
8. How can giving circles use technology, especially the internet and social media, to expand their influence and impact?
9. What role do giving circles play in passing philanthropic values to the next generation?
10. Where do you see the giving circle movement in five and ten years?

# Interview Questions

1. What were your personal motivations for starting a giving circle?
2. Were any of the 6 C's + 3 of women's giving helpful to you as you started your circle and if so, how?
3. Was there any one event or personal happening that made you think you just had to organize your circle?
4. Was there anything that occurred in your childhood that may have been an impetus for you to begin a giving circle?
5. How has your involvement impacted your life and those of your family and friends?
6. What have you personally gained from beginning a giving circle?
7. Was there ever a time when you felt this might not happen? If so, how did you overcome those feelings?
8. What do you think was most important when you started your giving circle to bring it to the success it is today?

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# Descriptions of Giving Circles Discussed in this Booklet

**African American Women's Giving Circle (AAWGC)** focuses on women and girls in Prince George County.

**Asian Women's Giving Circle (AWGC)** is a group of Asian American women pooling resources to invest in Asian women-led, social change projects in New York City. AWGC focuses on Asian American women using tools of art to further social equity goals.

**Circle de Luz (CDL)** radically empowers young Latinas by supporting and inspiring them in the pursuit of their possibilities by providing extensive mentoring, programming, and scholarship funds for further education. CDL focuses on education.

**Dining for Women (DFW)** empowers women living in extreme poverty by funding programs fostering good health, education, and economic self-sufficiency, and cultivates educational dinner circles inspiring individuals to make a difference through the power of collective giving. DFW focuses on education, vocational training, microcredit, healthcare, and food security.

**Funding Arts Network (FAN)** is dedicated to supporting and enhancing the visual and performing arts programs offered in Miami-Dade County through member-supported grants to arts providers, capacity-building workshops for grant applicants, and forums for members which foster arts involvement, appreciation, and awareness. FAN focuses on performances and exhibitions of local art groups.

**Hmong Women Giving Circle's (HWGC)** mission is to redefine philanthropy within the community to encourage activism and create social change for Hmong women and girls. HWGC focuses on Drug abuse prevention, GLBT advocacy, building healthy relationships, advocacy for elderly women, ending human trafficking, mentorship building, increasing educational opportunities for teens, preservation of women's wisdom through women's history, community investment, and support for new refugees/arrivals.

**Impact 100 (I100)** empowers women to dramatically improve lives by collectively funding significant grants that make a lasting impact in our community. I100 focuses on education, health and wellness, family, culture, and environment.

**Impact Austin (IA)** is a progressive leader in women's philanthropy, bringing new resources to the community and making philanthropy accessible. We inspire, engage, and develop women to effect positive change. IA focuses on culture, education, environment, family, and health and wellness.

**Lovelight Foundation (LF)** focuses on outreach, education, and funding to improve the quality of life for impoverished families and children through health, education, and nutrition.

**Washington WomenAde (WW)** purposes to enjoy women friends in wonderful, warm and lively parties, while bringing

money from those that have, to some who have not. WW focuses on arts and culture, education, environment, health, and human services.

**WELLMET** is educating and expanding women's roles in philanthropy, building and strengthening the New York City community through pooled investments, and demonstrating the impact of knowledgeable, targeted grantmaking. WELLMET focuses on emerging community and grassroots organizations.

**Women of African Descent Giving Circle (WADGC)** seeks to fund programs that advance the education and full potential of Black women and girls in Minnesota. WADGC is committed to advancing the social, political, and economic health, well-being, and leadership of Black women and girls in Minnesota. WADGC focuses on education.

**Women of Influence Giving Circle (WIGC)** is committed to using our collective power to create positive, sustainable change in the lives of women and children. The group leverages the power of every dollar to create real and sustainable change by funding programs and services that address issues of safety, healthy, and equality for women and girls in Minnesota. WIGC focuses on economic justice, social change, safety and security, and healthcare.

**Women of IT (WIT)** aims to close the gender gap in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) professions. Increase the number of girls graduating from high school

who are entering a university-level technical degree program. WIT focuses on gender-equity teaching training at high school and middle school level, career workshops for guidance counselors, and summer physics camps for females entering high school physics.

**Women's Endowment Fund's (WEF)** purpose is to develop the WEF as a permanent base of financial support for special programs and/or projects that enhance the lives of Jewish women and children. WEF focuses on Jewish women and children.

**Women's Giving Alliance (WGA)** aims to inspire the women of northeast Florida to be strategic philanthropists and to improve the lives of women and girls through collective giving. WGA focuses on pre-k through 12 public education, economic empowerment, physical and mental health, and violence and crime intervention and prevention.

**Women's Giving Circle of Howard County (WGCHC)** is building a community of philanthropists and creating a permanent legacy to address the needs of women and girls in Howard County.

Name	Status	Year Founded	Number of Members	Minimum Annual Dues for Members	Annual Allocation Amount	Average Grant Amount	Average Grants Allocated Annually	Total Grants Allocated	Total Amount Allocated
African American Women's Giving Circle www.thewomenfoundation.org	Partner with Washington Area Women's Foundation	2004	25	\$1,000 for two years (changed from \$5,000)	\$50,000	\$25,000	2	8	\$150,000
Asian Women's Giving Circle www.asianwomensgivingcircle.org	Sponsored by Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy	2005	20-25	Members raise \$2,500	2005: \$55,000. 2006: \$74,000. 2007: \$72,000.	\$2,000 - \$15,000	6 - 8	18	\$201,000
Circle de Luz www.circledeluz.org	Nonprofit	2008	55	\$90 minimum	\$25,000 minimum	\$5,000 minimum	5	8	\$42,000
Dining for Women www.diningforwomen.org	Nonprofit	2003	3,000	None	2006: \$50,064 2007: \$118,447	\$12,000 - \$15,000	12	28	\$334,000
Funding Arts Network www.fundingartsnetwork.org	Nonprofit	1996	200	\$1,000 for individuals; \$1,500 for corporate	More than \$200,000	\$2,500 - \$20,000	30	354	More than \$2,000,000
Hmong Women Giving Circle www.aapip.org	Donor-advised fund of Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy	2004	20	\$500	2004: \$4,000 2008: \$36,000	\$3,000 - \$13,000	3	5	\$40,000
Impact 100, Inc. www.impact100.org	501(c)(3) Nonprofit	2002	222	\$1,000		\$120,000	2	12	\$1,439,000
Impact Austin www.impact-austin.org	501(c)(3) Nonprofit	2003	510	\$1,000	2004: \$126,000 2005: \$201,000 2006: \$324,000 2007: \$416,000 2008: \$510,000	\$100,000 minimum	5	15	\$1,577,000
Lovelight Foundation		1992	1,000			\$500 - \$250,000			\$1,000,000

Washington WomenAde www.washingtonwomenade.org	Nonprofit	2001		\$35 per potluck									
Washington Women's Foundation www.wawomensfoundation.org	501(c)(3) Nonprofit	1995	500	\$2,300 (\$2,000 for grantmaking and \$300 to support operations)	\$1,000,000 (in 2008)	\$100,000 (pooled fund) and \$1,000 (individuals)	500 (individuals & pooled funds)						\$8,400,000
WELLMET www.wellmetgroup.org	Partner with New York Community Trust	1999	37	\$5,000 for three years		\$7,500 - \$20,000	12	45					More than \$1,000,000
Women of African Descent Giving Circle www.wfamn.org	Donor-advised fund of the Women's Foundation of Minnesota	2005	16	Levels (\$1,000; \$500; \$250)	\$12,175	\$4,000	3	3					\$12,175
Women of Influence Giving Circle www.womenofinfluenceinc.org	Donor-advised fund of the Women's Foundation of Minnesota	2007	50	\$1,000 for two years (with voting rights); Less than \$1,000 (without voting rights)				5					
Women of TI Fund	Donor-advised fund of the Dallas Women's Foundation	2001	71		\$197,000 (in 2008)	\$35,000	4	17					
Women's Endowment Fund www.jewishminnesota.org	Partner with Minneapolis Jewish Community Federation	1988	56	\$2,500 over 5 years; Junior membership (for under age 35) is \$1,000			3 - 5	55					\$56,670
Women's Giving Alliance www.womensgivingalliance.org	Initiative of the Jacksonville Community Foundation	2001	228	\$1,500	\$250,000 (in 2008)	\$25,000 - \$56,750 strategic grants; \$2,500 - \$5,000 special grants	11	66					\$2,222,890
Women's Giving Circle of Howard County www.womensgivingcircle.org	Fund of The Columbia Foundation	2002	600	Levels (\$10,000; \$5,000; \$2,500; \$1,000; \$250; \$100)	\$33,000 (in 2008)	\$1,000 - \$5,000	7	30					\$134,000



### THE CENTER ON PHILANTHROPY AT INDIANA UNIVERSITY

The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University is a leading academic center dedicated to increasing the understanding of philanthropy and improving its practice worldwide through research, teaching, public service, and public affairs programs in philanthropy, fundraising, and management of nonprofit organizations. A part of the Indiana University School of Liberal Arts at Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), the Center also collaborates closely with the Indiana University School of Public and Environmental Affairs. The Center operates programs on the IUPUI and IU Bloomington campuses. Founded in 1987, the Center created the field of Philanthropic Studies. Today it has more than 50 staff members and 60 faculty members across Indiana University.

According to *The NonProfit Times*, the Center and Indianapolis have developed into “a second nerve center, after Washington, D.C., for information, research and in-depth soul-searching in and about the charitable sector around the world. . . . If [the Center] doesn’t have the information from its own top-flight sector research, it knows where to get it. . . . [the Center is] the first stop for bringing the sector together to think and develop practical solutions.”

### WOMEN’S PHILANTHROPY INSTITUTE

The Women’s Philanthropy Institute became part of the Center on Philanthropy in 2004. The mission of the Women’s Philanthropy Institute is to further understanding of women’s philanthropy through research, education, and knowledge dissemination. By addressing significant and ground-breaking research questions and translating that research into increased understanding and improvements in practice, WPI helps to leverage new and expanded resources for the common good. WPI is the only organization to examine all aspects of women’s philanthropy through a value-neutral lens, from distinctive structures and models to the multiple roles of women in philanthropy and in the nonprofit sector.

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