



Women for Women Magnifies Donor Impact

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By Susan White

When I first learned about Women for Women, the potential this giving circle could have for our community intrigued me. And then I discovered that when granting money to charitable causes as a group, 1 + 1 really does equal 3!

The Women for Women giving circle was launched in 2006 through the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln, with the purpose of engaging women of all generations in the power of collective community philanthropy.



Its simplicity makes the fund unique, and wildly effective. Each year, our members pool their financial contributions, which allows the fund to award large, impactful grants to innovative local programs that support women and children. We accomplish much more together, as a group, than few of us could do individually, magnifying the impact of our donations.

Last week I was thrilled to gather with other Women for Women members for our annual grant reception at the INB Conference Center, where we announced a total of \$50,000 in grant awards to two local organizations – Wooden It Be Lovely and Jacksonville Area Center for Independent Living.

Wooden It Be Lovely works with mothers who are healing from poverty, addiction and/or abuse. Employment and support from the program empowers these women to build a more stable livelihood for themselves and for their children. Our 2019 grant will provide more women an opportunity to recover as Wooden It Be Lovely expands its work in the coming year.

The Deaf Wings program through Jacksonville Area Center for Independent Living is unique not only for our area, but also for the country. Deaf Wings supports women suffering from domestic and sexual violence. Deaf women are particularly vulnerable to domestic and sexual violence and experience additional barriers when seeking help. The 2019 grant will provide direct advocacy services for deaf victims and launch new community-based educational workshops and enhanced training to improve the effectiveness of supports and services for the deaf community.

Over the past eleven years, Women for Women has cumulatively granted over \$325,000 to local nonprofits. At present, our permanent endowment tops \$700,000, all because of the collective giving of women in our community.

As engaged philanthropists, we require all grant recipients to submit quarterly reports, informing us about the success of the programs we fund. From those updates, we know that our investments in these program have real measurable results. Past programs we have funded increased confidence and self-esteem among young girls; encouraged girls to consider careers in STEAM-fields; facilitated reconnection between incarcerated mothers and their children; improved math and reading skills of at-risk elementary school students; and more.

While we awarded \$50,000 this year, the grant process highlighted the need in our community. Twenty-six area organizations submitted proposals this year, requesting more than \$800,000 for community programs. Clearly there's still work to do. We are committed to continue pooling our donations to tackle real and pressing issues facing local women and children.

It's a remarkable donor experience to be a part of a giving circle. Membership in Women for Women is easy. First, annual contributions are due to the Community Foundation on or before December 31 each calendar year. Second, we host three annual events throughout the year. And third, these events are opportunities to meet other women and learn about local charitable causes.

Visit www.CFLL.org to learn more about Women for Women and how you might be able to magnify your charitable impact by joining with others to accelerate meaningful change in our community. When we work together, 1 + 1 equals 3!

Susan White is a founding member of Women for Women and serves as the giving circle's 2019 grant committee chair. For more information about Women for Women, please visit www.CFLL.org or contact the Community Foundation for the Land of Lincoln at 217.789.4431.