



SUPPORT OUR GRANT FINALISTS

The Women's Fund of Vanderburgh County encourages fund members and other interested donors to learn more about our grant finalist. All finalists welcome donations of any amount.

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For information on **The Women's Fund** contact Barbara Dicken, director of the Vanderburgh Community Foundation, (812) 422-1245 or e-mail barb@vcfoundation.org.

LAUNCHING A LEGACY

In its inaugural year, the Women's Fund of Vanderburgh County surpasses expectations to create lasting community support

"Why not Evansville?"

These three words are what a group of local women asked themselves after reading a story in *Evansville Living* about Impact 100, an organization of 100 women in Owensboro, Ky., who joined forces for the betterment of their community. Shortly thereafter, the idea for the Women's Fund of Vanderburgh County was born.

The premise is simple: Amazing things happen when women get together to study problems, analyze solutions, and invest in their community. In its inaugural year, members of the Women's Fund overshot their initial goal of \$100,000 by raising \$115,000 from 180 women who signed on to be charter members. About half of it went to establish a permanent endowment, while the other half was awarded to the Boys & Girls Club of Evansville to help the organization expand the number of children it serves as it moves into its new headquarters in the inner city. In addition, three other worthy community-based organizations that serve women and children were awarded grants of \$1,000 each.

The formation of The Women's Fund began as many efforts do that are spearheaded by women: Through a series of conversations among friends. A core group of women hosted small parties in their homes, inviting women they knew who might be interested to come hear more about the effort. Initially, they thought they might model themselves after similar women's funds with limited



membership and mandatory minimum contributions. But that didn't quite seem right for Evansville, so the group took special care to ensure this organization would be unique: opening up membership not only to individuals, but to any group of women who would pledge \$1,000 to the fund.

Jan Davies, CEO of Girl Scouts of Raintree Council and co-chair of The Women's Fund along with Kristen Tucker, attributes this forward-thinking view to the fund members, whom she describes as "very intelligent people with a purpose." Indeed, members of The Women's Fund quickly united behind the common cause of helping women and children in need.

"These women recognized that for women and children to prosper, sometimes they just need a little extra help. We shared what the opportunity here was, and they wanted to be part of that," says Davies.

The advisory board designed an application and selection process that involved Women's Fund members at every step in the process. Marjorie Soyugenc, Welborn Baptist Foundation executive director, agreed to chair the first grants committee. After reviewing applications on paper, a team of women made site visits to the organizations selected as finalists before narrowing the field to the final four: The Boys & Girls Club; the Boom Squad, Inc., a drum-line performance group



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LAUNCHING A LEGACY (CONT.)

that reaches out to at-risk children and teens; ECHO Community Health Center, an inner-city medical clinic; and Holly's House, an advocacy center for women and children who are victims of violence.

The Fund investments are managed by the Vanderburgh Community Foundation.

Excitement was evident at the Nov. 15th, 2007, annual meeting, when the final four candidates for the grant made passionate presentations to the fund's members, who cast their ballots for the winner. While the Boys & Girls Club was awarded the top grant, the three

other organizations benefited as well: Beyond the \$1,000 grant each was awarded, many fund members wrote them individual checks, and volunteered to support their efforts in other ways as well.

Fund members left the meeting feeling inspired. Says Davies: "I'm looking forward to 100 years from now when someone opens up a history book in the Willard Library and says, 'Wow, look what these women did! It started out so small, but just look how big it is now.'"

- by Maureen Hayden and Katie Sims

THE GRANTS COMMITTEE

Fifteen members of the Women's Fund enthusiastically agreed to serve on the fund's first Grants Committee. A few, like Marjorie Soyugenc who chaired the committee, were veteran grant makers; others had never experienced the grant-making process and were eager to learn and participate. The Fund received 23 letters of intent. After a thorough review, those letters were narrowed to eight organizations invited



to submit the complete grant application.

Grants Committee members then conducted comprehensive site visits and interviews of the eight organizations, representing the spectrum of the need in Vanderburgh County. Finally, the women made personal presentations to the full Grants Committee on

their findings and experiences with the applicants. While the process during that final meeting was all decorum, the enthusiasm for the

grant applicants was overwhelming and contagious.

Through a preferential ranking system, the eight final organizations were narrowed to four, who would be invited to present their request at the Annual Meeting.

A press conference was held in early November to announce the four finalists. Following the press conference, members of the Fund met with the finalists over lunch to discuss the annual meeting and what the organizations could expect.

Two weeks later, the first grant of the Women's Fund of Vanderburgh County was made.

2007 GRANTS COMMITTEE

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Deborah Goldman
Shelli Hancock
Kristen Haynie
Vicki Hubiak
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Charlotte Kohlman
Laurel Mills
Robyn Musgrave
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Gwen Sandefur
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Teresa Stanley

INTRODUCING...

The Women's Fund of Vanderburgh County Cub/Cadet Game Room of the new Boys & Girls Club!

The Cub/Cadet Game Room at the Boys & Girls Club is one of the most vibrant, active and inspiring rooms in the facility. On any given day, you can find as many as 50 to 100 children age 6 to 9, playing, learning, sharing, socializing – truly being kids. The Cubs and Cadets take great pride in having their own space, and they demonstrate their pride by keeping the room tidy and organized. Activities include playing board games, billiards, foosball, and a wide variety of other activities. A high priority is placed on academic success, so the members are offered assistance with their homework the moment they arrive. This is a critical age for healthy development, and the evidence of the Club's success can be found in the smiles on the faces of the Cubs and Cadets.

“ It is a tremendous honor to have been selected as the first recipient of the Women's Fund Grant. Receiving an award like this is humbling and invigorating – knowing there are so many community-minded individuals who support the Boys & Girls Club. ”

- Jamie Morris, Resource Development Director

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