

## INSPIRATION, INITIATIVE & AN IDEA UNFOLDS

In 1998, a small group of Syracuse women returned from the nationally acclaimed women's leadership training, Leadership America. They had been inspired to find a significant and vital mission to call their own—a way to honor the incredible legacy of women's strength in the Central New York region. Ideas abounded, but at every turn, the lack of financial resources thwarted their endeavors. Instead of retreating, these committed leaders soon took on the cause of creating a dedicated philanthropic endowment for women and girls where none had existed before.



*The first faces of The Women's Fund*

The women behind this cause recognized that the collective philanthropic power of women has infinite potential to enhance the lives of women and girls. It became their mission to harness the transformative promise of all women by:

- **Establishing in women a sense of identity and responsibility as philanthropists**
- **Funding programs that support and empower women and girls**
- **Developing and recognizing leadership in women and girls**
- **Promoting the status of women in the community at large**

Partnering with the trusted Central New York Community Foundation, the Women's Fund of Central New York was born. An initial goal of \$100,000 by securing \$1,000 in contributions from 100 founding charter donors—was quickly surpassed. Amazingly, over \$170,000 was received in donations and pledges in a very short amount of time. The Women's Fund of Central New York quickly gained momentum and began to establish itself as an important philanthropic force in our community.

## THE CASE FOR THIS CAUSE

An early Women's Fund of CNY objective was to counter the national philanthropic trend of less than 7% of charitable resources being allocated specifically to programs and projects that supported women and girls—even though women constituted more than 50% of the U.S. population. The highest earnings by women to date had reached only 72 cents for every dollar earned by men. Today, only 29.6% of businesses in New York State are owned by women.

Since the inception of the Women's Fund, its objective has been compounded. Though there has certainly been a wave of momentum toward women's economic equality, socio-economic challenges still exist. And, the recession of recent history has underscored the need for movement toward the end goal of economic independence for women.

In the most recent recession, three-quarters of the 8 million jobs lost were those of men. Though some of these jobs will likely come back, the recession revealed a profound economic shift. In 2010, women made up the majority of the workforce for the first time in U.S. history. Of the 15 job categories projected for most growth in the next decade, only two are dominated by men. Clearly, the complete recovery of our economy depends on the full participation of women.

*"As a woman, it didn't take me long to realize I wanted to be one of the first to put my money into this new endeavor. I could have given my \$1,000 directly to an individual's scholarship and it would have been a nice thing to do. But giving to an endowment, which goes on into perpetuity, is a gift that keeps on giving."*

—Peggy Ogden, Charter Member and former President of the  
Central New York Community Foundation

## THE COURSE OF CHANGE

Finding ways to overcome barriers and propel all women toward economic self-sufficiency and achievement of their full potential as community members is paramount to the Women's Fund of Central New York.

The Women's Fund recognizes how women are often disproportionately affected by many of society's challenges, and, thus, require specialized solutions to ensure that they and, by extension, their families succeed. The Fund is committed to effecting positive change in the lives of women, girls and families.

Since 1999, with the earnings of its endowment, the Women's Fund has made grant awards totaling more than \$100,000 to various local agencies and organizations. Inspiring young girls to become leaders, helping a single mother complete her education and preparing women for jobs in nontraditional building trades are just a few examples of some small but important grants that are having an exponential effect on women and girls in our community.

*"Though the status of women has unequivocally risen in recent decades, the need for economic self-sufficiency for every woman is real. The tireless efforts of the Women's Fund members and the generosity of its donors will, undoubtedly, move us closer to realizing that objective in Onondaga County."*

—Joanne M. Mahoney  
County Executive, Onondaga County

The Women's Fund supported Mercy-Works "Passport 2 Vision," a program targeting at-risk high school-aged girls.



*"It helped me grow as a person, to learn how to trust in people and life skills like taking initiative. We learned how to work out issues and how to have great relationships with friends and parents. My life would not be the same without these programs."*

—Amanda Jolly

The Women's Fund of CNY's supported YWCA's Plumbing Course graduate Cindy Peel who is now setting her sights on the Plumbing and Steamfitter's Apprenticeship Program.



*"When you get through one challenge in your life, it makes you want to complete everything else that you start to do."*

—Cindy Peel

## A ROLE FOR EVERYONE

The Women's Fund is about every Central New York woman and girl, from the newly on-her-own mother seeking to gain the skills necessary to make a better life for herself and for her children to the grandmother who wants to leave a legacy gift to inspire her granddaughters. It is about those in business and civic leadership positions looking to make a philanthropic investment in others.

Beyond fundraising and grant stewardship, the Women's Fund is committed to drawing upon the combined networking and mentoring power that its donors possess in order to amplify and enhance the philanthropic promise of the women who follow.

## TODAY AND TOMORROW

Now in its second decade, as the economic and social forces in our country and community demand even more from women as full participants within every sector of our economy and society, the Women's Fund of Central New York is embarking on an ambitious goal to reach \$1 million in its endowment.

The \$1 million campaign, like the efforts to reach its first \$100,000 when the Women's Fund began, is about the power of collective philanthropy and the multiplying effect it will have on women and girls for years to come. A \$1 million endowment dedicated solely to the promise of empowered, economically independent and philanthropically active women means a community closer to realizing equality and prosperity for all its members.