



Empowering Women Since 1997

WHF Foundation 20th Anniversary: Celebrating 2017 The Year of Service and Volunteerism

The Women in Housing & Finance Foundation celebrated 20 years of supporting women and families through financial literacy, transition housing assistance, economic empowerment and academic scholarships throughout 2017. All year long, the Foundation held a series of special events, recognizing the nonprofits supported by its Partnership Grants Programs as well as its partner associations -- Operation HOPE and Trinity Washington University.

"We wanted to showcase our partners and grant recipients during this year of celebration," said Mary Martha Fortney, WHF Foundation President. "It is their programs that really make a difference in the lives of low-income or other at-risk women and families," she added.

Through the commitment of WHF members who volunteer their time and talents as well as members and organizations which make significant financial contributions to support its mission, for over two decades the Foundation has contributed more than \$600,000 to local organizations through grants. In addition, the Foundation conducted financial literacy sessions and provided \$21,000 in scholarship grants to Trinity Washington University.

2017, the *Year of Service and Volunteerism* was filled with volunteer events celebrating the Foundation's partners.

In February, the Foundation kicked off its celebration with a "Welcome and Wine" event honoring WHF grantee partner **Good Shepherd Housing & Family Services (GSH)** of Alexandria. The event provided an opportunity for WHF members to network with colleagues and GSH representative over wine and cheese while assembling "welcome home" kits and budget notebooks kits for families served by GSH. GSH serves low income families which typically consist of a working parent and children by providing safe, decent housing at affordable rent. WHF members wrote welcome notes to be included in the kits for families entering their new homes. The February event was organized by Foundation Board member and GSH liaison Evan Davies.

In April, WHF volunteers spent the afternoon planting flowers at the two **Open Arms Housing** residences in Washington, DC to beautify the residents' homes. "WHF volunteers enjoyed providing and planting the beautiful flowers at the Open Arms' residences to help the women residents," stated Jane DeMarines, the WHF Foundation Director who organized the event.

In May, WHF volunteers provided and served a Mother's Day Brunch to women residents and children living at **Bridges to Independence** in Arlington, Virginia. The children were treated to a fun morning of games with the volunteers. The special morning was planned and organized by WHF Foundation Director and Bridges liaison Brandy Schantz. "WHF volunteers enjoy giving back to the community, and the brunch was enjoyed by all," Brandy noted.

In June, WHF volunteers toured the Freddie Mac Foundation Family Home operated by **Doorways for Women & Children** in Arlington, Va. The Family Home welcomes between 6 and 9 families at a time, providing a safe, temporary haven for families who are homeless. The Family Home offers comprehensive services to help families get back on their feet. The tour was organized by Foundation Director Suzanne Garwood.



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The Foundation also conducted a half-day Financial Empowerment Retreat at **Calvary Women's Services** in Anacostia in June. Organized and planned by Foundation President Mary Martha Fortney and Risa Freedman, WHF volunteers facilitated two breakout sessions. One of the sessions dealt with Money Management and the other dealt with Credit Repair issues. "The women were talkative, friendly and eager to discuss and learn about these important matters," Mary Martha pointed out after the retreat. Judging by the tremendous reception we received the Foundation and WHF volunteers plan to hold this retreat annually at Calvary.

In January, March and October, WHF volunteers hosted the **Calvary** women residents who celebrate their birthdays. During the festivities, those having birthdays in those months were treated to decorations, refreshments and birthday gifts. Lively music and special games of "Heads Up" were enjoyed by all. WHF volunteers included Sydney Garmong, Kris Kully (and her 15-year-old son Will), Lindsay Donnelly, Jena Roscoe, among others. "It was so fun to be involved in the party, and it was especially rewarding to see the women enjoying themselves so much," said Kris.

In October and November, the WHF Foundation expanded its successful **Changepulse** program to female residents of **Good Shepherd Housing**. This unique program was created by the WHF Foundation and has been used for two years at Calvary Women's Services. The Changepulse program is designed to assist individuals in creating a healthy consciousness around money that supports and expands their lives. For six Wednesday evenings in October and November a team of WHF volunteers facilitated lively discussions with a group of 8 women, each with their own challenges and determination to make positive changes in their financial lives.

For this inaugural program, WHF volunteers Jennifer Aguilar, Mary Martha Fortney, Sharon Grabner, and Bobbi Montoya rotated to facilitate Changepulse sessions. During the series, both the participants and the volunteers learned from each other, supported each other and celebrated successes. Congratulations to the Changepulse graduates of Good Shepherd Housing! Additional classes are scheduled to begin in spring 2018. The Changepulse will also be brought to residents of **Interfaith Works** in Maryland and **Bridges to Independence** in 2018.

In December, under the leadership of Foundation Board director Brandy Schantz, WHF volunteers hosted and prepared a holiday brunch for residents of Bridges to Independence. Director of Development Jeanette Norton thanked WHF as follows: "on behalf of the entire team at Bridges to Independence, thank you for throwing a beautiful holiday brunch for our shelter residents. You always go above and beyond to make our clients feel special? Thank you for your thoughtfulness...and delicious food! We have helped make the holidays brighter for our families!"

Also in December, WHF members participated in a clothing drive in behalf of **Interfaith Works** in Rockville, Maryland and **Open Arms Housing**. Members donated both men's and women's gently used clothing which was provided to the two non-profit partners for their use as appropriate.

In the Fall, the **WHF Foundation** celebrated its **20th Anniversary** with a Reception on September 28th. WHF members, event sponsors, WHF Foundation grant recipients and guests were in attendance. Celebrating and recognizing the contributions of the WHF members who created the



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WHF Foundation, the evening was filled with camaraderie and testimonials of thanks to the previous WHF leaders who recognized the potential for connecting the enormous financial and intellectual capacities of WHF members with women and children in the greater Washington, DC community in need. Current and former Congressional members served as Honorary Co-Chairs and well-known banking and finance supervision analyst Jonathan Fietcher offered his congratulations and remarks. Funds raised through sponsorships, donations and the Silent Auction will be put to good use as the part of the Foundation's grant awards in 2018.

I hope you will agree that 2017 was a fabulous year of celebration, volunteerism and service in recognition and appreciation of the WHF Foundation. We expect 2018 to be as fantastic and hope you will continue to follow, support and participate in the events planned.