

Making the Case



News from the Women's Fund of Greater Milwaukee: December 2009

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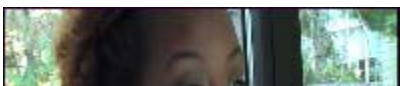
Give the gift of social change this holiday season

When you help a woman, you are also helping her family and when families thrive, so do entire communities. That is why [social change](#) is so important--its impact goes well beyond fulfilling immediate needs. Please [donate](#) to the Women's Fund so we can continue to create real, systemic change for women and girls that will benefit everyone. After all, the cost of supporting social change is nothing compared to the price of things never changing. **This holiday season honor your family and friends with the eternal gift of social change. Make a tribute gift to the Women's Fund in their name. [Donate Now>>>](#)**

Women's Fund awards almost \$300,000 in grants for 2010

The Women's Fund is bringing in the new decade with a bang! We are happy to announce that we will make \$282,845 in grants to support social change for women and girls in 2010. In total, 32 organizations will receive 46 grants (view the entire list of grants [here](#)).

The beauty of programs that take a social change approach is that every dollar counts--not only once but many times over. For instance, a twenty dollar donation won't just support a single fitness class. A twenty dollar donation will support preventative health measures and long term behavioral change that will be passed down for generations to come.



[What do we mean by "SOCIAL CHANGE?"](#) *Jayme Montgomery-*

Donate

Yes, I want to learn more about how I can contribute to social change through women & girls.

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Baker, WI State Director of the Campaign Against Violence at the League of Young Voters (a Women's Fund grant partner), uses a parable with roots in African folklore to explain social change in the context of her work.

The social change impact of the Women's Fund's philanthropic and grantmaking programs will be varied in 2010; spanning the areas of economic justice, social justice, and leadership development. For example:

- A Women's Fund grant to Meta House will help sustain programs and services that reduce the stigma associated with women who abuse drugs.
- Health promoters trained by CORE/EI Centro will continue educating Milwaukee's Latina community on healthcare options and preventative health measures thanks to Latinas en Acción.
- A financial awareness program at the Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative Corporation will offer workshops and a matched savings account in part due to a grant from the African American Women's Fund Project.
- A grant from the Lesbian Fund to Diverse & Resilient will support African American lesbian and bisexual women as they engage in health awareness projects and community organizing.

[View the entire list of grants here.](#)

Julie Gilbert unites voices for women's leadership at Women's Fund luncheon



[Julie Gilbert discussing women and leadership](#)

This year the Women's Fund invited Julie Gilbert, innovator and business strategist, to deliver the keynote speech at the annual Women & Public Policy Luncheon. Julie Gilbert, shook the podium with her personal story of how a woman from Draper (population: 80), South Dakota, came to the sad realization that the glass ceiling for women in business still very much exists even if it reveals itself quite subtly.

Gilbert quickly found out how vastly different corporate decision making is from how things worked in Draper, where decision making was a group effort. "In a corporation," she said, "the top of the house makes all the decisions--and these are all typically

men." Despite her quantifiable success at growing Best Buy's business she was held to different standards than her male counterparts. The worst moment in her career, however, came when she realized that the other female executives, whose names she couldn't remember, hated her.

Gilbert is a woman who does not sit back. She responded by launching a highly innovative program within Best Buy known as WOLF (Women's Leadership Forum) to bring women (employees and customers) into the decision making loop, to nurture leadership skills through mentoring, and to create a space where women can collaborate with each other. The program consisted of a web of regional "WOLF packs" and innovation teams. Best Buy saw quantifiable gains since Gilbert launched WOLF: a \$4.4 billion increase in revenue from female customers, an 11% increase in total company revenue, and a large increase of female employees and women in managerial roles.

"Women are, for the first time, the predominant buyers. When women get involved in the decision making, they start innovating and sales to both men and women increase," said Gilbert. She was convincing not just because of her enthusiasm but because of the hard evidence for her way of thinking. Having left Best Buy earlier this year, she now runs WOLF independently and applies her theories across several sectors--including business, nonprofit and government.

An important lesson emerged from Gilbert's speech: "In a male dominated work environment, women have a new responsibility to other women. Make sure your voice is being heard and make sure that there is a younger woman who doesn't look like you can get her voice heard." Not coincidentally, this is oft quoted advice from Women's Fund grant partners whose social work ranges from bringing more women into the leadership pipeline to creating awareness of reproductive justice rights.

If Julie Gilbert's quest for change permeates, we will all (male and female) proactively avoid sexism and we can jointly reverse the bleak ratio of 18 female leaders to every 100 male leaders in this country.

Before her keynote speech at our recent Women & Public Policy luncheon, Julie Gilbert gave this [interview](#) about women and leadership. In it, she discusses everything from personal priorities to personal finance. The a-ha moment for us came when she revealed her secret for having it all--whatever "all" means to you. [Watch a video clip of this interview.](#)

Social Change Exchange: Where leadership,

gender, and culture meet

A little more than 50% of this country's population is female. Then why do women account for only 18 percent of our top leaders and make only 78.7 cents to every dollar earned by a man? Does women's leadership matter? "Yes," says Liz Johnson of the White House Project at the recent Women's Fund-sponsored Social Change Exchange on women's leadership. She elaborated, "Women have learned to collaborate, build relations, leverage resources, and negotiate. Women lead despite who is in charge."

On November 17th, the Women's Fund held a Social Change Exchange to kick off the annual Women & Public Policy luncheon. The exchange included a panel of five vocal women leaders: Ava Hernandez (with Public Allies and Latinas en Acción), Susan Noble (with the Reproductive Justice Collective), Liz Johnson (with the White House Project) and Carmen Pitre and Angela Mancuso (both with Sojourner Family Peace Center). Sixty-five people squeezed into a meeting room at the Italian Community Center in Milwaukee to discuss women's leadership and why it matters.

Panelists emphasized the following strategies:

Build Allies: Sarah Noble successfully lead several Milwaukee organizations by looking to both men and women to create allies wherever she goes.

Include: Community activist Ava Hernandez has seen the pitfalls and rewards of leading as a woman of color. She says, "Be conscious of how you lead--bring numerous other women of color into the group."

Be Interested in Change: "My greatest fear is apathy. If apathy sets in social change won't happen. Whatever the issue is we have to speak it and say it despite the adversity," says Angela Mancusco of the Sojourner Family Peace Center. Her colleague Carmen Pitre, spoke out for change that makes the world a safer place for women, "The world will shift when we recognize the level of violence against women, particularly those who cannot protect themselves."

The White House Project recently released a draft version of a [ground breaking study](#) on why women leaders make a difference. Not surprisingly, the report states that a diverse group can come up with a better solution than a group of experts. Sarah Noble of the Reproductive Justice Collective bluntly expressed the same sentiment: "Women are in the

world--it makes sense for them to show up in all places of the world."

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