

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What is the Women’s Fund?

A: The Women’s Fund is a permanent endowment under the administration of the Fond du Lac Area Foundation established in 2004 by a group of community women working in conjunction with the Women’s HOPE Network to fund programs and projects that support women and girls.

Q: Why was the Fund established?

A: Women and girls are disproportionately affected by a number of issues, including access to health care, domestic violence, abuse and lack of financial resources, all of which limit their ability to participate fully in our community. Available data shows that less than 6% of philanthropic dollars in the United States support programs and services specifically designed for women and girls. The community members involved with the HOPE Network decided to address these concerns locally by establishing the Fund at the Fond du Lac Area Foundation.

Q: Who is in charge?

A: A group of women from the community is serving as the Board of Directors (--advisory to the Board of The Fond du Lac Area Foundation) for the Fund. In that role, the Board of Directors retains first level of responsibility for how the Fund operates.

Q: Why is the Fund part of the Community Foundation?

A: There are three reasons. First, it is the purpose of the Community Foundation to build, invest and administer permanent charitable endowments—the Community Foundation is uniquely situated to manage the Fund. Second, The Fond du Lac Area Foundation has a long history of making grants across the entire spectrum of community concerns. Third, the Community Foundation has a very successful history of effective and efficient grant-making processes. For these reasons, the Fund will benefit substantially from its association with the Community Foundation.

Q: What is an endowment fund and why did the Women’s Fund choose to establish itself as an endowment?

A: An endowment fund is a permanent fund established within the Community Foundation for either specific or general purposes. In this case, it is established to benefit women and girls. Because the principal of the endowment will always remain intact (only the earnings or a set percentage of the market value of the fund will be distributed in grants), the Fund will always be available to support programs and services for women and girls, year after year.

The Board of Directors chose endowment to emphasize the permanence of the Fund. It wants donors to visualize their involvement over several years to insure that funds are available for women and girls, even as priorities and issues change over time.

Q: Since it takes a long time to build an endowment, how long will it take before the Fund makes grants?

A: The Fund distributed the first round of grant money in 2004 and will provide grants every year as the Fund grows. By emphasizing pledges of financial support over several years, we have funds available both for building the endowment and for making grants. Once the endowment is large enough, we will be able to use the endowment earnings to fund grants, and invest new donations into the principal of the endowment.

Q: What kinds of projects will be funded?

A: The initial policies of the Fund state that “the Fund shall provide assistance to programs which promote intellectual, physical, emotional, social, economic and cultural growth of women and girls of all ages.” Thus, we have very wide latitude in the range of programs and activities to be funded.

The Board of Directors envisions funding projects in the arts, education, social and health services, leadership development, cultural understanding, athletics, etc. The intent is to be open

to many possibilities. It is eager to receive innovative proposals, projects from young women and girls and proposals that address challenges and opportunities for women and girls. It welcomes input from women interested in making suggestions for possible uses.

The Board of Directors also wants to build and increase the sense of philanthropy among women of all financial means and backgrounds. It envisions the Fund as a major vehicle for increasing giving—both financial and time—among women across our community.

The goal is to make a bigger “pie” for all of the organizations, which serve women and girls. By offering another vehicle for giving, the Fund will draw new dollars into services for women and girls. Community organizations already serving women and girls will be encouraged to apply for grants from the Fund.

Q: How will funding decisions be made?

A: A Women’s Fund Grants Committee serves as a distribution committee. It functions much like the Grants Committee that The Fond du Lac Area Foundation uses in making its funding decisions. In both instances, committee members read the proposals, visit the program sites, and make recommendations to the Board about which programs should be funded.

Q: Won’t this Fund hurt the organizations that have traditionally served women and girls—such as the YWCA or Girl Scouts?

A: We have no intention of interrupting the funding that flows to agencies in our community already serving women and girls. We encourage the people who support those organizations to continue to do so directly.

Q: What about men? Where do they fit in?

A: Men are and will be an important part of the success of the Fund. We are encouraging men to make gifts to the Fund in honor or memory of a special woman or girl in their lives. We are encouraging men to learn more about the issues that affect women and girls, on behalf of their mothers, wives, daughters, nieces, co-workers, and friends; and to support the organizations that make a difference in women’s lives.

Q: Do I have to have a lot of money to make a difference in the Fund?

A: No, you don’t. Every gift is important, because every dollar that is given is combined with other dollars to create a larger whole. It is the collective power of all of these dollars working together that makes the difference. Your dollar is just as important as any other dollar! When published, donors are listed in alphabetical order not by the amount they give, to emphasize our commitment of honoring all gifts, large and small, equally.

Q: How can I get involved in making the Fund successful?

A: There are a number of ways:

- ◆ by making a financial contribution to the Fund;
- ◆ by making a pledge over a three to five year period;
- ◆ by telling your friends about the Fund and encouraging them to give;
- ◆ by volunteering to help with fundraising and other important activities

Q: Who do I call to get more information?

A: Call the Fond du Lac Area Foundation at 921-2215.