Join Us and Create Change

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- Inviting us to speak to your friends or women’s group
- Hosting a house party
- Making a donation online at www.wfmontana.org

We’d like to liberate you from one more burdensome piece of paper by sending Women’s Wire to you electronically instead of by mail. Kindly send us your email address (send to jeneuell@mtcf.org). The money we save on printing and postage will go to advance the mission of the Women’s Foundation, to support programs that result in enhanced economic self-sufficiency for women and brighter futures for girls. If you prefer paper, we will be happy to continue mailing you a printed copy.

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Honorariums

Jenny Baggen in honor of Charlotte Baggen and Ruth Fikes
Carlos Cari in honor of Albertino Joseph
Mary Cragle in honor of Alia McLeod
Kelley H. and Matthew R. Donaldson in honor of Anne Haley
Rubens Erin in honor of Don Eust
Jan Euell in honor of Jane Euell
Brian Hoving in honor of Elizabeth Venohr
Kim Ottens in honor of Diane Edwards
Diane Saich in honor of Linda Reed
Mike Schottman in honor of Linda Carlson
Alida S. Stone in honor of Myrna Stone
Edwin Stammers in honor of Ellen Stammers
Eleanor S. Furbush in honor of Suzanne Luepke

Memorials

Sandra Anderson in memory of Teresa (Patrick) Anderson
Norma Tapp and Gordon B. Bennett in memory of Sheila Sullivan
Lisa Bullock in memory of Caroline Dowens
Margery D. Elness in memory of Sally Marion
Linda and Paul Leimbach
Blanche Ward
Sally Marion
in memory of Lisa Bullock
Norma Tirrell and Gordon B. Bennett
in memory of Sheila Sullivan
in memory of Linda Carlson
in memory of Susan Brown
in memory of Myrna Stone
in memory of Carol Erdison
Cheryl Holf in honor of Suzanne Luepke

The Women’s Foundation of Montana hosted a gathering of nearly 100 women and girls at Chico Hot Springs on April 29th and 30th to participate in cross sector dialogue about the economic status of women in Montana and to work toward innovative solutions to further lift up our gender: The Convening comes on the 10-year anniversary of the WFM’s first Spring Convening held in the spring of 2002, and was a celebration of ten years of good grantmaking which has culminated in more than $460,000 in funds granted to support women and girls across Montana through job training, financial education, leadership training and more.

Aspire participants were enthusiastic, energy in the room was high and conversation was fierce. Presenters were diverse, representing leadership and ideas from a variety of sectors. Montana legislator Diane Sands grounded the event, speaking to the long history of women leaders in Montana. Entrepreneur Sarah Calhoun inspired, speaking to her experience founding her company, Red Ants Parts.

Mary Craigle and Leslie Zilm of the Census and Economic Information Center provided the facts, sharing their research and findings about the current economic status of Montana women. Their presentation was the highlight of the event, as participants were excited about new resources which will allow ongoing real time updates and mapping of data.

Many amazing women also presented as a part of our Montana Bright Spot and Consequential Collaborations panels, sharing their evolving work and innovative social change models.

What we learned

At the Aspire Convening information was collected from participants by recording the conversations that took place, as well as through a written survey.

What can we do?

The main priorities identified in the discussion groups included increasing financial education and stability, the promotion of women occupying higher paying, more powerful jobs, and making healthcare, education, and childcare accessible and affordable. Involving women in conversations about these issues is very important. The barriers facing women and girls reaching their full potential might be alleviated by advocating policy and legislative change.

Key topics discussed within our table conversations included education, policy, economic realities facing women and girls, violence against women, and the housing crisis. Participants also discussed economic development, networking opportunities, the involvement of men within women’s rights, and the cultural changes women are facing today. Common conversations emerged around Montana’s wage equality and job availability, the role for for-profit businesses in creating social change, women’s healthcare initiatives, funding cuts within the schools, and the varying perspectives of women and girls within our society.

Aspire Convening

Inspires

How far have we come?

Shifts for women in the past 10 years have been a mixed bag. Many feel that there has been progress, women are occupying more positions of power, are more involved in workforce and politics, and have higher levels of education. This fosters independence and self-reliance. At the same time, many participants felt that there were serious problems facing women in Montana today: increasing inequality (between rich and poor, and between men and women), healthcare, childcare/career choices, inadequacy of wages, and the soaring costs of higher education.

Women’s Foundation of Montana

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Women’s Foundation of Montana

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Thank you for supporting a brighter future for women and girls.

When women and girls prosper, communities flourish.
New Faces

Emily and Sarah

Status of Women in Montana

The Women’s Foundation of Montana is committed to providing resources and support to help nonprofits serving women and girls in Montana succeed. We know there is a lack of quality data available on the status of women and girls in Montana. This information is vital to nonprofits when writing grant requests and advocating for new programs and policies. To meet this need, WFM is doing research and compiling data to create a new document, the Status of Montana Women Report, which details exactly how Montana women measure up in terms of income, employment, education, and many other key indicators.

To ensure that the voices of women are included in the Status of Montana Women Report, the WFM is conducting focus groups with women across the state. So far we have conducted four focus groups with women in Helena, Missoula, Columbus and Billings to discover what their experience has been in the recent tough economy; their thoughts, on what is needed to help Montana women succeed and their ideas for the best way to provide financial education to all Montanans.

Initial findings include:

- The primary concerns of the group participants included the rate of unemployment in our state, rising fuel and living costs, low minimum wage, and the export of Montana’s resources. In addition, many women were concerned about health care and worried about the future for themselves and their families.
- Women of all ages were particularly concerned with student loan debt.
- Most women reported they do not feel hopeful about their own financial future or that of future generations.
- Women in the Billings group were the exception.
- Women reported they felt the best way to improve their own economic future was by creating more jobs and higher paying jobs. They also felt lower gas prices would help and felt that keeping resources such as oil and gas that we export here in Montana would address this issue.
- Most women reported they were primarily responsible for managing their family’s finances, yet have never received a financial education past basic account management and bill pay.
- Almost all were very interested in receiving more financial education, whether through money management classes, online resources, or one-on-one counseling, but weren’t sure where to turn for these resources.

The Women’s Foundation of Montana will be conducting several more focus groups around the state and working closely with the Montana Census and Economic Information Center to collect good data for inclusion in our Status of Montana Women Report to be published in the fall of 2012.

Emily Gutierrez
Emily recently graduated from the University of Montana with degrees in Creative Writing and Spanish. A native Montanan, she enjoys many outdoor activities including trekking, skiing, rock climbing, and backpacking. While she has lived most of her life in Montana, she also loves to travel. Her international experiences created her initial interest in women’s issues around the world. She has worked for several nonprofits in the state including the Montana Food Bank Network and A.W.A.R.E., Inc. Sarah joined the Women’s Foundation of Montana as an AmeriCorps VISTA and is excited to learn more about women’s issues in our state. “WFM has opened my eyes to many problems facing women in Montana. To me, financial education means self-sufficiency and success for women, and I am thrilled to share my part in creating positive change in our communities.” She believes that global change must start at a local level and is passionate about helping women across the state. Sarah is excited to play a role within WFM to build a more sustainable society in which all community members have equal opportunities to thrive.

Emily Gutierrez is also a native Montanan, born in Whitefish. Also a recent graduate from the University of Montana, Emily earned a BA in Political Science and a minor in Women’s and Gender Studies. She started volunteering at a victim support center in high school, and has continued her pursuit of increasing opportunities and resources for women in Montana ever since. Emily joined the WFM as an intern and she is very excited to work with the Women’s Foundation in their pursuit of enhancing opportunities for women and girls. Emily’s future plans include attending law school, fighting gender violence, empowering women, having children (and lots of cats), and living in Montana.

Sarah and Emily are key components of the Women’s Foundation’s new initiative to research and create a Status of Women in Montana Report, and were a major force in creating and producing the 2012 Aspire Spring Conference. In addition, both women will be working to increase the WFM’s assets and impact in Montana. Welcome Sarah and Emily!

Did You Know

- In 2010, there were 492,748 women in MT making up 49.8% of the population. It is the first time male residents out-numbered females since the 1960 Census.
- For both men and women in Montana, higher levels of education create greater median income. However, in Montana, as women gain higher levels of education, the wage gap between women and men with the same level of education increases. A woman with a Bachelor’s degree had a median income of $31,181 in 2010, a man with the same degree had a median income of $33,941, a difference of $2,760.

- A 2012 study from the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority Investor Education Foundation showed that women with low levels of financial literacy were more likely to take part in costly credit card behaviors than men with a low level of financial literacy. However, there were no differences in behavior between men and women with high financial literacy.
- The Parents, Kids and Money survey from mutual fund company T. Rowe Price revealed that only half of parents regularly set aside money to save and only 43% set financial goals. Most parents (77%) say they are not always honest with their kids about money. 15% lie weekly. Half are willing to discuss saving and spending issues but almost no one talks about tougher concepts like inflation (19%), investing (16%), diversification (11%), and asset allocation (8%). A third avoid talking about the family’s finances altogether.
- Women and girls reinvest 90% of their income into their families as compared to only 30% to 40% for a man.

We’re Headng Your Way

Welcome Sarah and Emily! Jen will be visiting WFM supporters in your community to hear input and ideas for creating economic self-sufficiency for women and girls. If you’d like to visit with her, please contact her by emailing jeneuell@mtcf.org

Women's Foundation of Montana Grants 2002–2011

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<th>Economic Sustainability</th>
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Total: $467,894

When women and girls prosper, communities flourish.