

Fall 2019 **Newsletter**

**WCF** WESTCHESTER  
COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION  
A DIVISION OF THE NEW YORK COMMUNITY TRUST

# Investing<sup>in</sup>Change



## COVER STORY

### Women Helping Women & Girls

*Teen participants at the Running & Winning Workshop, League of Women Voters of Westchester*

[wcf-ny.org](http://wcf-ny.org)

## Q&A with Dale Akinla, WCF Board Chair



### What led you to join the Board?

At the time that I was asked to join the Board in 2012 I was giving back to my community on a micro level, at my church and at a local library. The idea of giving back on a county-wide level was very appealing. At Westchester Community Foundation, I assist in identifying and expanding the Foundation's

family of donors who can help solve community problems through their charitable giving, now and permanently. That's impact.

### What's the greatest challenge facing the Foundation?

Thanks to the generous donors who have established permanent funds with us, the Foundation is able to fund amazing programs that lift people up and transform communities. However, we will need more resources to address the many remaining challenges.

### How does the Foundation put permanent funds to work?

Every day we hear stories of people who benefitted from our donors' legacies: traumatized children who received specialized therapy, artists who honed their craft in fellowship programs, seniors helped by volunteer handymen, and young people who received education and job training as an alternative to incarceration. Our support for these and many more programs was made possible through our permanent funds.

### How does the Foundation work with different types of donors?

We know that people have a variety of ways and vehicles to execute their giving. For those who know exactly what they want to support, our donor-advised funds offer a streamlined and tax-smart way to give. For those who want a deeper dive on the issues they care about, the Foundation is here to help.

The staff can introduce donors to effective local organizations and work with them to develop their philanthropic plans to ensure Westchester becomes a better County for all, now and forever.

## A Permanent Fund for Women and Girls

It was a single statistic that caught their attention. Pat Larson and Rita Gilbert were attending a conference for community foundations in the early 1990s. It was at a breakout session that they heard about a fund another community foundation had started for women and girls. "We couldn't believe that only a tiny percentage of the total philanthropy in the country at the time was going to support women and girls," recalls Larson, executive director.

At the next board meeting Pat and Rita, board chair, proposed creating a fund for women and girls. When it became clear the men on the board didn't understand the need for such a fund, long-time member Vito Russo broke the stalemate.

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*"I'll make the first donation," he said.  
"I never had children of my own, but my wife  
and stepdaughters are very dear to me."*

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**Gaining support.** A dedicated group of women, representing Westchester County's racial, ethnic, cultural, and geographic diversity, developed an ambitious plan to educate themselves and the community about the needs of local women and girls. Members of the newly formed group decided to create a permanently endowed fund and to call it the **Westchester Fund for Women and Girls**. It was 1992, and they weren't sure if other women would support it. But support it they did – and so did a few enlightened men. By 1996 the Fund was making grants.

**Lasting impact.** The Fund's annual signature breakfast attracted hundreds, honored women leaders, and raised significant funds from individuals, area corporations, and organizations. Speakers included First Lady Hillary Clinton (1999), Brandeis University law professor Anita F. Hill (2000), and tennis legend Billie Jean King (2005).

By 1999, the women had reached their initial goal of \$500,000, representing \$1 for every female in the County. They raised the bar and met their new goal of \$2 million by 2005. Today this permanently endowed fund is worth \$2.5 million. The Fund will award \$92,000 in grants this year to support local nonprofits that are making a difference in the lives of women and girls. Annual grant awards will be possible in perpetuity.

**Westchester Community Foundation.**





## A Path to Public Service

With support from the Westchester Fund for Women and Girls, the **League of Women Voters of Westchester** held its eighth annual Running & Winning Workshop in April to inspire young women to consider public service as a career. Fifty-two junior and senior high school students from 25 Westchester schools attended the day-long program at the YWCA in White Plains.

The girls met with Lt. Gov. Kathy Hochul, NYS Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, NYS Senator Shelley Mayer, and 18 other female public officials who shared their experiences in seeking public office. In small groups, the girls interviewed an elected official who then rotated to the next group of girls. Each group of girls planned a mock campaign, analyzed a campaign issue, and wrote and delivered a campaign speech. **Said one teen, "Seeing all of these women be so confident in their elected positions made me realize I could do the same."**

**From 1992-2018 the Westchester Fund for Women and Girls has grown through sound investment while making an impact.**

Total Gifts



**\$2 Million**

Market Value



**\$2.5 Million**  
(December 31, 2018)

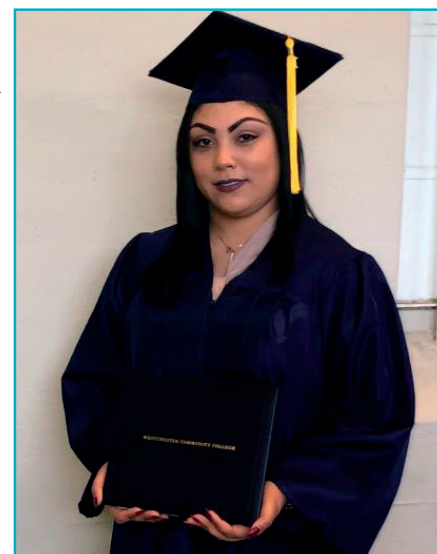
Grants



**147 grants totaling \$1.5 Million**

## Help the Moms, Help the Family

Early grants from the Westchester Fund for Women and Girls focused on supporting agencies that subsidized child care for the children of working moms and taught parenting skills. It also provided leadership opportunities and scholarships for young women with low incomes and supportive services for homeless women. Significant funding was given to reduce domestic violence, sexual assault, and dating violence, and to provide legal and social supports to survivors and their children.



*Mishelin Pichardo*

In recent years the Fund has supported programs for low-income women struggling to overcome multiple challenges. **Family Services of Westchester** provides a parenting program called EMERGE for incarcerated mothers at the county corrections facility. **At a recent graduation each woman shared her "Fire Story" – a time in her life when she "walked through fire" and came out the other side.**

In June, the **Mary J. Blige Center for Women and Girls at Westchester Jewish Community Services** held its annual Recognition and Achievement Ceremony for 17 women, many of whom are single moms. The Academic and Career Support Program helped prepare them to pass their high school equivalency exam and master essential job skills. Mishelin Pichardo, an alumnae, earned her Associate's degree from Westchester Community College in June and will attend Lehman College in the spring. A single mom, Mishelin is the case manager at the Center. **Every day she leads by example, proof that what might seem impossible at the start really is possible with support and determination.**

Where you can combine your passions and generosity for lasting impact.

## Westchester Community Foundation

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# Investing@change

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## Henriette Granville Suhr: She cared about the environment.

Henriette and William Suhr were self-taught gardeners, yet over the course of 50 years they turned Rocky Hills, their 15-acre weekend retreat in New Castle, into an award-winning gardener's delight. She was an interior designer; he was an art conservator. Both

had an eye for design, texture, and color, filling the grounds with rhododendrons, peonies, azaleas, tulips, daffodils, and roses. They learned mostly by trial-and-error, fearlessly moving trees and plants when they became too big for their space or to make room for new plantings.

**For the public.** Although widowed by 1984, Henriette continued to garden into her 90s, welcoming the public to her oasis during the Garden Conservancy's Open Days. The garden remains a popular staple on the Open Days calendar.

**Her legacy.** After Henriette's death in 2015, the **William and Henriette Granville Suhr Fund for the Environment** – a permanent fund – was established at the Westchester Community Foundation to support causes she cared about. The Fund underwrote a youth



horticulture program at Untermyer Park and Gardens in Yonkers. Student interns from Yonkers public schools spent their summer restoring an historic rhododendron garden.

## WHAT DO YOU CARE ABOUT?

To set up a permanent fund that will support your favorite cause, in perpetuity, call Laura Rossi or Donna Banks at 914-948-5166.



Photograph by Ken Druse



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Check out our website at [wcf-ny.org](http://wcf-ny.org)  
and follow us on **Facebook**, **Twitter**, and **LinkedIn**.