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Philanthropic Giving By and For Women on the Rise, Study Finds

Milwaukee, WI (July 31, 2009) – Foundation giving specifically targeted to benefit women and girls has surpassed the rate of overall foundation giving in recent years, and women’s funds are a rapidly growing and influential force within philanthropy, according to a new report jointly released by the Foundation Center and the Women’s Funding Network. The Women’s Fund of Greater Milwaukee is a member of the Women’s Funding Network.

The report, [*Accelerating Change for Women and Girls: The Role of Women’s Funds*](#), is the first of its kind and examines giving patterns and trends among larger private and community foundations as well as the distinctive contributions of women’s funds to philanthropy. Women’s funds are grantmaking entities that seek out and invest in women-led organizations and programs that are building solutions to core challenges in communities.

“This study underscores that investments in women and girls can have big social returns. It suggests that women and women’s funds will be increasingly involved in reshaping philanthropy and bringing to the fore important issues like human trafficking and domestic violence that for far too long have been neglected,” said Bradford K. Smith, president of the Foundation Center.

The study found that between 1990 and 2006, giving directed to women and girls by the broader foundation community climbed 223 percent, after adjusting for inflation, compared to an overall giving increase of 177 percent. Giving by the 55 women’s funds analyzed in the report also rose an inflation-adjusted 24 percent between 2004 and 2006, while foundation giving overall increased 14.8 percent in the same period. While this growth is promising, the study also notes that foundation giving targeting women and girls remains a small percentage of their overall giving.

“We are starting to understand what the international community has known for a long time—that investing in change for women creates real change for the whole community,” said Elaine Maly, executive director of the Women’s Fund of Greater Milwaukee.

Key findings of the study include:

- The nation's private and community foundations increased their giving for activities targeting women and girls from an estimated \$412.1 million in 1990 to nearly \$2.1 billion in 2006.
- The over 145 member funds of the Women's Funding Network provide an estimated \$60 million a year in grants and leverage millions more through their wider relationships and connections.
- Women's funds take a comprehensive approach to social change, focusing their giving on human rights, health, and economic empowerment.
- In contrast, foundation giving for women and girls is primarily focused on health. Close to half of grant dollars targeted to women and girls support health-related activities.
- Women's funds are guided by the principle that women catalyze and lead the way to change in neighborhoods and communities; 98 percent of the women's funds surveyed indicated that achieving social change was a high priority for their fund.

The report is based on the Foundation Center's annual grants database, which includes all grants of \$10,000 or more awarded by over 1,000 larger foundations; summary level fiscal data on 55 women's funds; detailed grants data for 25 of these funds; and a 2008 online survey of women's funds conducted by the Women's Funding Network.

This study was made possible in part by support from The Wallace Foundation. The Foundation Center's Research Institute is funded in part by The Wallace Foundation, which supports and shares effective ideas and practices to help institutions expand learning and enrichment opportunities. To learn more, visit the Knowledge Center at www.wallacefoundation.org.

To access the report and the executive summary, visit <http://www.womensfundingnetwork.org/resource/report/accelerating-change>.

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About the Women's Fund of Greater Milwaukee

The Women's Fund is a social change grantmaker and has made investments in cutting-edge programs at more than 100 community-based agencies through the support of more than 3,200 donors and 200 volunteers. We are the first and largest permanent resource in Wisconsin dedicated exclusively to funding and advocacy for the emerging needs of women and girls. We support women-led solutions to critical community issues by engaging women in the power of collective philanthropy, and by supporting robust organizations that address issues that impact women and girls. The Women's Fund is part of a network of 130 women's funds worldwide.

Our mission is social change through women and girls. Our vision is to help create a world that is just and fair for everyone. We are guided by the values of inclusion, leadership, equity and sustainability. You can learn more about the Women's Fund at www.womensfund.com.

About the Foundation Center

Established in 1956 and today supported by close to 600 foundations, the Foundation Center is the nation's leading authority on philanthropy, connecting nonprofits and the grantmakers supporting them to tools they can use and information they can trust. The Center maintains the most comprehensive database on U.S. grantmakers and their grants — a robust, accessible knowledge bank for the sector. It also operates research, education, and training programs designed to advance knowledge of philanthropy at every level. Thousands of people visit the Center's web site each day and are served in its five regional library/learning centers and its network of more than 400 funding information centers located in public libraries, community foundations, and educational institutions in every U.S. state and beyond. For more information, please visit foundationcenter.org or call (212) 620-4230.

About the Women's Funding Network

As a global network of more than 145 women's funds and a movement for social justice, the Women's Funding Network accelerates women's leadership and invests in solving critical social issues — from poverty to global security — by bringing together the financial power, influence and voices of women's funds. You can learn more about Women's Funding Network at www.womensfundingnetwork.org.