

## **WIP History Part 2**

### **2005-2008 –Years of Growth**

Women in Philanthropy flourished between 2006 and 2008. The 100 Founding Members were committed to the cause and had created the initial \$300,000 endowment, which quickly began to grow. In 2006 there were four committees up and running: Communications, Events, Grants, and Membership; and processes were being established for the functioning of the organization. In 2007 two additional committees were added: Board Development and Strategic Planning. Susan Ketchum continued to lead the organization as Board Chair through the next few years. By the end of 2008 the organization had nearly 200 members and the endowment had grown to almost \$500,000.

In January, 2006, Women in Philanthropy hosted the first Community Services Showcase, highlighting the work of many of Beaufort County 501(c) 3 organizations. The event was organized by the Events Committee, which was co-chaired by Jane Carty and Helen Payne. Held at the Hilton Head Boys and Girls Club, it was created as an opportunity to showcase local nonprofit organizations' programs and services and to connect with clients, potential volunteers, donors, and area newcomers. Liz Clist, Communications Chair, organized a large public relations campaign to inform the public of this one-stop showcase event. Women in Philanthropy provided refreshments, entertainment, childcare, and speakers to encourage participation. Linda Silver and Susan Barnwell coordinated the many volunteers needed for the event. Though attendance by the public was disappointing, the showcase provided a terrific opportunity for networking among the nonprofits involved. They deemed it a big win because they better understood each other's services and how they could better serve their clients together.

The Grants Committee, led by Jean Henderson, was organized in 2005. In 2006, their work focused on developing guidelines for the grant applications and review process. Everything had to be created, since WIP was a brand new organization. They determined that improving education and literacy in Beaufort County was a great need in our communities, and that became the focus for the inaugural round of grants. At the first annual luncheon, held in late March 2006, the first two grants were given: \$4500 to Thumbs Up, a northern Beaufort County-based organization that serves children of mentally handicapped parents; and \$1500 to Brain Gain, an enrichment program promoting the benefits of educational excellence in low income, minority middle school students.

The Membership Committee, led by Trish Heichel, organized a number of neighborhood recruitment events throughout 2006 and 2007 to increase interest in the organization. They also worked with the Communications Committee to create the new WIP brochure highlighting the mission and goals of the organization, and featuring a number of new annual giving levels.

In the early years of the organization, the annual grants theme was chosen by the Grants Committee based on perceived community needs and then approved by the Women Philanthropy Board. In 2007, the organization awarded grants to four organizations focusing on children's health.

Bluffton Self Help was awarded a grant of \$1500 to provide for school needs for students at Bluffton, M.C. Riley, and Okatie Elementary Schools. The mission of Bluffton Self Help is to help individuals in the greater Bluffton area who are in need of short-term emergency assistance.

The Children's Center was awarded a grant of \$2,000 to fund financial hardship scholarships. The Center serves children at its Hilton Head Island and Bluffton sites, and has been serving this area since 1967.

A Community of Caring for Children was awarded a grant of \$2,000 to fund 1000 dental kits for distribution. The group's primary goal is to meet the dental needs of schoolchildren in the area. In 2004, they performed more than 11,000 procedures on 2,200 children.

In 2007 the Board held an all day Long Range Planning Session with the facilitation of Deborah Richardson, CEO of the Atlanta Womens' Foundation. Their goal was to chart the organization's course for the next five years, assessing how to leverage strengths and overcome weaknesses.

Outcomes of the planning session included:

- Decision to increase the Board of WIP by two members. That would distribute the workload more evenly across the Board and enable the start of new programs while not losing site of current work.
- Creating a Board Development Committee and a Strategic Planning ad hoc Committee.
- Board members stated their dreams for the growth of the organization over the next five years.

On November 1, 2007, at the South Carolina Yacht Club in Windmill Harbour, Women in Philanthropy held its second annual "Share Philanthropy with a Friend" event. Members were encouraged to invite a friend to join this circle of giving, caring women in our community. The 2008 theme of "Family Mental Health" was introduced to the members.

At that luncheon WIP was introducing the new theme. The third year of grant-making would be 2008. Grant applications with a focus on Family Mental Health were distributed to non-profit organizations in Beaufort County, with a return due date of November 15, 2007. By then the organization's grant-making mission had been honed and clarified: "To strengthen families and individuals in the areas of arts and culture, community development, education, the environment, health, and human services.

It is worthwhile to note that at the end of fiscal year 2007, the endowment had grown to \$407,942.

On January 26, 2008 Women in Philanthropy hosted the Second Community Services Showcase from 1:00-4:00 PM at Shelter Cove Mall. By all measures the event was a huge success. Approximately 300 area residents attended, and fifty-five nonprofit organizations exhibited their programs/services and talked with attendees about meeting local needs, as well as opportunities for volunteering and philanthropy. The exhibits were informative colorful and well organized. The mall's center court had the look of a professional trade show.

The planning had begun a full year ahead, and it showed. Mary Noonan and Sheila Armstrong, chairs of the Education and Communications Committees, and their members worked for months to contact and register non-profits, and instruct participants in setting up exhibits. Publicity included full-color posters, pro bono ads in The Packet, Bluffton Today, The Bluffton City Sun, and Hilton Head Monthly, radio spots on The Coast; a WHHI TV Interview on Talk of the Town; outdoor sign boards, mailings to area churches and counselors; and email blasts to WIP members.

The morning of the event, WIP members set up the event space and registration, and then helped the non-profits with their set up. Thirteen WIP members served as hostesses during the event and monitored the door prize tables and information racks. WIP information was available throughout. This was an enormous undertaking and great service to the community.

Note: You many remember that in 2008, when this event occurred, Shelter Cove Mall was still an enclosed mall with Belks at one end and Saks at the other end. Subsequently, most of it was demolished, except for a remodeled Belk anchoring one end. The rest of the space has given way to the new, more modern clusters of shops, restaurants, walkways, and the large Kroger at the other end.

In May of 2008, Women in Philanthropy held it's fourth annual luncheon at Colleton River, with guest speaker, Kelly Ferrin, a gerontologist who had been studying aging and retirement issues for over 20 years. She gave a rousing speech on the secrets to aging in extraordinary ways.

Women in Philanthropy also announced its third year grants totaling \$12,000 to four very worthy organizations:

\$2000 to Alzheimer's Respite & Resource for its Caregiver Program, which focuses on body, mind, and soul, via support groups that touch all aspects of caregivers' lives.

\$3000 to Hope Haven of the Lowcountry for an onsite Therapy Counseling Program. They are the only children's advocacy and rape counseling center in the area. Seventy percent of clients are under 16 years of age, and the largest population is 12 and under.

\$4000 for Mental Health America to develop software and a database for their organization, with a goal of making mental health services more accessible to families and individuals who need them.

\$3000 for Programs for Exceptional People for the Recreation and Respite Program, which provides opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities to receive quality and accessible respite services while learning new skills as a member and active participant of the community.

Also at the May 2008 Annual Meeting, Mary Noonan was elected as the new chair of the board. Susan Ketchum had ably led the board since Women in Philanthropy's inception in 2003. She liked to end her Chairman's column with this quote from Margaret Mead: ***"Never doubt that a group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."***

More than 60 WIP members attended the Fall Kick-Off Luncheon at the Wexford Clubhouse in October of 2008. The purpose of the luncheon was to announce the year's grants theme of "Enabling the Disabled" and to learn more about the topic from a guest speaker. \$14,000 was allocated towards these grants, for distribution in the spring.

Deborah Walsh, Executive Director of the Jasper County Board of Disabilities and Special Needs spoke about the need for resources to serve disabled individuals throughout the Lowcountry. With significant state-wide budget cuts, nonprofit agencies serving the disabled have sought funds from many other sources.

To end the year, Board Chair, Mary Noonan, hosted Women in Philanthropy members at her home on Friday, December 12<sup>th</sup>, to enjoy holiday fellowship and good cheer. Members truly enjoyed her home-made treats. Thus began the tradition of WIP holiday parties.

For context, we all remember the financial crisis of 2008! In the next part of this history, we'll look at the impact that had on the organization's endowment.