

WOMEN IN PHILANTHROPY
From Idea to Impact
The Beginning - 2003-2005

How did Women in Philanthropy begin? Whose idea was it? Why are we part of the Community Foundation of the Lowcountry? These are all familiar questions for those new to our organization, so let's start with a bit of history.

The Town of Hilton Head was incorporated in 1983, not that long ago. By 1994, a group of visionary community leaders recognized the need to create a community foundation. Through the sale of Hilton Head Hospital and a generous cash donation, Hilton Head Island Foundation, Inc. was born, with a mission to provide philanthropic leadership to a growing community.

In 2001, The Foundation's service area expanded to include northern Beaufort County, Colleton, Hampton and Jasper Counties, and the name changed to The Community Foundation of the Lowcountry.

Shortly thereafter, leaders of the Community Foundation of the Lowcountry learned from their national association that "giving circles" had become an important and growing force in philanthropy, investing more than \$44 million in communities nationwide in the first few years of the new century. They also learned that women were often the driving force behind this new philanthropic trend.

Recognizing this changing landscape, in 2002 the Community Foundation of the Lowcountry explored the idea of creating a "giving circle" here, and asked Susan Ketchum, who served on their board, to explore the idea. Susan gathered a group of women she knew to be community leaders to consider the idea. Under Susan's leadership, these six women, Liz Clist, Trish Heichel, Beryl La Motte, Mary Noonan, Helen Payne, and Jane Carty (deceased) became the organizing committee for Women in Philanthropy.

In 2003 Women in Philanthropy was established when they each pledged \$3,000 over three years, and agreed to personally ask 100 other women to join and also pledge \$3,000 over three years to create our initial endowment. This leadership committee developed the mission statement and agreed on a committee structure. Liz Clist asked Jean Henderson to be the first Grants Committee chair, a critical position since we needed to develop and then execute our process for soliciting, evaluating, and giving grants, and then reviewing progress on them. The leadership committee also decided that all committee chairs would serve on the board. Other early board members included Margaret Conn, Mitzi Ganelin, Lois Graver, Barbara Terreri, and Carol Wilson.

From the beginning, Women in Philanthropy was dedicated to highlighting the vital role women play in our community. The organization's early leaders focused on their mission of inspiring and educating women to become philanthropic leaders in the Lowcountry, and were dedicated to significantly increasing the opportunities for women to fully participate as philanthropists. The organizing principles were as follows:

- Women In Philanthropy would be an endowed fund within The Community Foundation of the Lowcountry.
- WIP would focus philanthropy on Beaufort County
- The 100 "Founding Members" would commit to donate \$1000 each per year for the first three years to Women in Philanthropy, thus creating a \$300,000 endowment.
- Other women would then be invited to join at other giving levels.
- Grants would be made from that endowment according to a set formula (It started as 5% of a rolling average over 24 months of endowment assets and later changed to 4.5% of the rolling average over 5 years of those assets).
- The organization's structure would include an Advisory Board with a chairperson, plus a committee structure, with annual and other meetings as set by the Advisory Board.

Susan Ketchum became the first Advisory Board Chairperson. WIP's first three years were focused on growing the organization's membership, building the endowment, and putting the committee structure in place to carry out the work of the organization. The organizers worked diligently over those first three years to attract others to Women in Philanthropy's mission and grow their numbers.

Barbara Terreri chaired the first membership committee. The goal was to open membership broadly to women with many interests, and with many possible giving levels, so the membership committee developed a multi tiered annual giving level structure from Initiator at \$250 to Visionary at \$5000.

- \$250 – Initiator
- \$500 – Sponsor
- \$1000 – Advocate
- \$2500 – Benefactor
- \$5000 - Visionary

The idea was to attract members beyond the initial 100 Founders by later bringing women in at the initiator level, and encourage them to increase giving as they became more involved and committed to the organization's mission over time.

Initial Communications Committee Chair, Liz Clist, focused the work of her group on developing a membership brochure and a quarterly newsletter, first published in January 2006.

Jean Henderson chaired the first Grants Committee, whose initial task was to develop guidelines for grant themes, applications and a review process, all critical tasks, necessary for the first grant cycle scheduled for 2006.

Goals and milestones established in those first three years included:

Promote the power of collective giving:

- Received our first \$1000 in June 2003

Explore new approaches to address community needs:

- Laid groundwork for grants process and community engagement

Embrace Fellowship:

- Hosted first social gathering in March 2004
- Held first annual meeting in Spring 2004

In future editions of WIP News, we will feature highlights from our history across successive years. It is important to note how from these initial efforts, WIP has grown to be a powerful force for good in Beaufort County. Our endowment has grown to over \$1 million, and we have given grants to worthy non-profits in excess of \$600 thousand to help our community address a broad range of timely challenges, with themes now selected by our membership. All that in just 17 years, begun by a dedicated group of 7 women, who expanded their circle to include the rest of us.

You can all be proud to be a part of this important work. Thank you for your continued support of Women in Philanthropy!

Susan Hooker