

news

The Women's Fund

520 Columbia Drive, Suite 100
Johnson City, NY 13790
Phone (607) 772-6773
[donorswhocare.org](#)



Women's Fund Leadership:

Jennifer Small, *Chair*
Sandra Johnson, *Vice Chair*
Karen Bearsch
Christina Dolan
Joan Eisch
Rita Chirumbolo Ernstrom
Kate Fitzgerald, *Esq.*
Amy Howard
Melissa Klinko
Ann Machlin
Roberta Melville
Jacquelyn Newman
Angela C. Riley
Margherita Rossi
Nicole Rouhana
Marcia J. Steinbrecher
Colleen Wagner

Workshops Point Toward Greater Independence

Approximately 15 women will have a chance to gain new skills and build productive community ties, thanks to a recent \$2,274 grant from the Women's Fund, plus \$5,246 from the Community Foundation's Esther Couper Family Fund. Safe Streets, a community organization on Binghamton's West Side, will use the money to run a series of workshops for women from September 2019 to April 2020.

Safe Streets was formed to improve the quality of life in the section of the West Side north of Main Street. "We focus on providing services to enhance safety and opportunities for the residents," says Erin Marulli, the organization's secretary. The group also works to improve the

neighborhood's image and provide new programs and services for residents, she says.

Marulli came to Safe Streets through her work at another organization, Broome County Higher Education Access, Retention and Success (BC HEARS).

In the neighborhood known as North of Main, or NoMa, census figures show that 36 percent of households are headed by single women. The median income there in 2017 was only \$8,079, Marulli says. Those statistics point to a need to help women in NoMa cultivate skills that could help them boost their incomes and become more independent.

Safe Streets will run four workshops, each meeting twice a week for a month at the NoMa Community Empowerment Center at 85 Walnut Street. Each workshop will focus on a specific kind of work, with a professional teaching skills that could help women gain employment, improve their current employment or earn money through entrepreneurship.

For example, one workshop will focus on basic car repair. "That would mean changing a tire or checking the engine, so that if something goes wrong, they don't automatically have to go to a car shop and spend money," Marulli says.

Plans are still under development, but another workshop might teach women to refurbish clothing or furniture. Those skills would let women make repairs in their own households, reducing



the need for example, to replace a torn shirt or a broken table. A woman might also use her new skills to supplement her income by making repairs for others, Marulli says.

As women in the workshops get to know one another and the workshop leaders, they can gain social capital, developing supportive relationships and learning about new ways to get involved in their community.

"That's a huge aspect for us, that they increase their community participation, whether that's bringing their kids to a park during an event, or joining a nonprofit and working with Safe Streets to bring services back to the neighborhood," Marulli says. "Maybe they'll get their kids involved in a new school group, or Girl Scouts or Boy Scouts. They'll be meeting more people and getting more involved in the community, which will keep increasing their social capital and also give them a sense of purpose and empowerment, and a reason for living in this area."

2019 Women's Fund Grant Awards

Broome County Council of Churches \$7,000 for the Chop and Chat program that helps senior women fight food insecurity and social isolation (*Broome*)

Catholic Charities of Broome County \$8,000 for emergency assistance for working women to help them maintain employment (*Broome*)

Girl Scouts of NYPENN Pathways \$8,000 for the construction of a STEM classroom at Camp Amahami (*multiple counties*)

Safe Streets \$2,734 for a program to build social capital and employment skills among women in the northern part of the West Side of Binghamton (*Broome*)

Southern Tier Zoological Society \$8,000 for Project VOICE, which will have female veterans plan and execute a mosaic at the zoo (*Broome*)

Family and Children's Society \$2,250 for the Vocational Incentives program, which supports women with mental health diagnoses to achieve and maintain employment (*Broome*)

Emergency Assistance Helps Women Stay Employed

When a car fails inspection, or Grandma suddenly can't provide child care, a woman might have trouble getting to work. If she can't solve the problem quickly, she might lose her job.

Catholic Charities of Broome County had that situation in mind when it applied to the Women's Fund to support emergency assistance for working women who struggle to keep their heads above water. The Fund responded with an \$8,000 grant, which will let Catholic Charities assist about 30 women over eight months.

Several years ago, Catholic Charities started to expand its food pantry program with initiatives to help both men and women make financial gains. "We decided to turn our direction from providing 'things' to helping people move forward with their economic stability," says Mary Whitcombe, the organization's manager of emergency services.

Among the people who seek emergency assistance are many single

women, including single mothers. Some need help buying gas for the car that gets them to work. Some are certified nursing assistants who must buy special shoes or scrubs for their jobs. A woman might need help paying an up-front fee to reserve a place in day care, or paying a security deposit to obtain decent housing.

"We've found that people who live in substandard housing have more illnesses," Whitcombe says. "And we just had a woman whose apartment keeps getting broken into when she's at work." In both cases, a move to better housing could help a woman keep her job.

"We wanted to be able to offer a pot of money geared towards working women who are trying to maintain employment or go to school to further their economic stability, but who have these barriers that keep getting in the way," Whitcombe says.

"There are many people in our community, especially women, who are trying," she adds. But when more than 30 percent of your income goes to housing, and another large portion goes to child care, sometimes a paycheck just won't stretch to cover everything. Nonprofits and legislators are working on ways to close the gap between what low income residents earn and what it costs to live. "In the meantime, somebody's got to put a Band-Aid on it," she says. The grant from the Women's Fund will help in those efforts to provide this important financial first aid.

"We decided to turn our direction from providing 'things' to helping people move forward with their economic stability."

MANAGER OF EMERGENCY SERVICES,
CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF BROOME
COUNTY

Breakfast Keynote Lauds Women's Anger as a Force for Change

Although anger can divide and destroy, it can also bring people together, said Rebecca Traister, keynote speaker at the Women's Fund's 15th Annual Breakfast on June 13. "If women howl and rage, someone who shares their feeling might hear them and might howl along," Traister told the full house of more than 260 guests at the McKinley in Endicott.

A writer for numerous prominent magazines, Traister is also the author of several books, including the recent *Good and Mad: The Revolutionary Power of Women's Anger*.

Throughout our nation's history, women have used anger to fuel constructive action, Traister said. Those women range from Mum Bett—the enslaved Massachusetts woman who adopted the angry rhetoric of the nation's founders when suing for her own freedom—to the contemporary women, angry over current affairs, who have ploughed that emotion into successful political campaigns.

Every significant movement in this country has had angry women at the start, Traister said. But official histories often

leave those women out. "You have to look for them."

As MC for the breakfast, Margherita Rossi, a member of the Women's Fund's Leadership Committee, had a full view of the audience during Traister's address. "It was interesting to see a lot of women nodding, sitting forward, talking amongst themselves as if some secret had been let out," she says.

Given the diverse range of people who support the Women's Fund, some in the audience certainly disagreed with aspects of the talk. But in general, the program drew a positive reaction.

Among the guests who took Traister's message to heart were several young women from the DCMO BOCES Career Academy who sat at the author's table and chatted with her over breakfast. "I was so inspired by them," Traister said of these high school students, who serve as "mindfulness ambassadors" in the Academy's "Healthy Choices/Healthy Lifestyle Program." This is one of five programs that received a total of \$26,000 in grants from the Women's Fund in 2018.



Rebecca Traister and the staff and students from DCMO BOCES Career Academy

Traister was very attentive to the students, and they were very responsive to her, says Rossi, who sat at that table for breakfast as well. "She made a point of letting them know that they are the future, that so many women in the past have led to the progress that they are beneficiaries of, and that she hoped they would find a way to continue."

The breakfast also succeeded from a

philanthropic perspective, as attendees made more than \$5,000 in gifts to the Women's Fund on the spot. In addition, we're grateful to the breakfast sponsors who provided more than \$26,000 in total.

And, as always, we're grateful to members of the Special Events and Leadership Committees of the Women's Fund for organizing yet another inspiring event.