

Helping Women Pursue Their Business Dreams

The Women's Fund

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Ambitious women who want to start businesses are getting a boost from a recent Women's Fund grant to the Delaware-Chenango-Madison-Otsego Board of Cooperative Extension Services (DCMO BOCES). The \$4,568 grant supports scholarships that help women attend the Entrepreneur Academy, a four-week program for adult learners.

"It teaches them, from beginning to end, how to put together their business plan," said Martha Ryan, public and school liaison at DCMO BOCES.

Some students come to the program with specific business ideas, while others seek help figuring out how to transform a talent into a money-making opportunity, Ryan said. The course includes tips on how to take advantage of

the internet and how to develop passive income—revenue that doesn't require day-to-day effort, such as proceeds from a book self-published on Amazon.

DCMO BOCES held its first Entrepreneur Academy in person last November and then moved to a virtual format for a January session, due to COVID-19. A new course will start in March. Because classes are limited to 12 students each, there's a lot of room to tailor instruction to the interests of individual students and provide one-on-one coaching, Ryan said.

While the Academy is open to any adult learner, the scholarships supported by the Women's Fund are designed for women in need who are committed to launching businesses. The Academy awarded three scholarships for the November session and four for the January class.

One student who qualified for a scholarship is a retired art teacher. She had been selling her work at art shows until COVID cut off that opportunity. "She had a reputation and a product she could sell on line, but she didn't know how," Ryan said.

In the Entrepreneur Academy, she learned how to use web sites such as Etsy to sell her work. "And as a result of the planning, she decided to launch her own line of garden sculptures," Ryan said.

Another scholarship recipient had been running a restaurant that lost a great deal of business due to COVID. Seeking another source of income, she decided to



The Women's Fund grant paved the way for DCMO BOCES to receive support from other organizations. Here's Visions Federal Credit Union-Norwich branch manager Hillary Wilcox delivering a \$500 Seed Grant Sponsorship to career and technical education director, Jennifer Waite.

develop a new food product for commercial sale. Ryan connected the young woman with Patsy Smith, a Norwich resident who at one time had successfully marketed a salad dressing she developed. Smith agreed to mentor the new entrepreneur.

For women in the Entrepreneur Academy who get scholarships, the funding provides a chance to advance to the next step, in whatever direction they wish to go, said Jennifer Waite, director of career and technical education at DCMO BOCES. "It's been critical, for sure. I don't believe that many of them would have had the opportunity if that funding didn't exist."

Stay Tuned for More News on the Women's Fund Breakfast



KEYNOTE SPEAKER: JAMIE FLOYD

Like so much else during the COVID-19 era, plans for the Women's Fund Annual Breakfast in 2021 remain up in the air. The scheduled date is June 24, and legal journalist Jamie Floyd, scheduled to speak last year, has graciously agreed to give the keynote address. Suggested donation for the virtual event will be \$25. Unfortunately, we can't tell you a great deal more right now.

For updates, please check the Community Foundation's web site donorswhocare.org or follow the Women's Fund page on Facebook.

Study Explores Alternative Models for Child Care

When a community can't provide enough high-quality child care slots, that puts local women in a double bind. It could mean their children won't get a good education in the crucial early stages of their lives. And it could keep women from holding down jobs.

Child care centers across New York have been in tough financial straits for a long time, with many in danger of closing. The COVID-19 pandemic has made the situation even worse. Hoping to find a way out of this dilemma, in 2020 the Community Foundation, United Way of Broome County and the Conrad and Virginia Klee Foundation commissioned a study to identify models for child care that could better serve our region.

Sophia Geringswald, a student in the Master of Public Administration program at Binghamton University, conducted the research, which focused on Broome County. She recently presented her results.

As Geringswald examined the problems that plague child care, several major issues emerged. The commitment in the US to quality child care and education is inconsistent. Centers operate on tight budgets, which means they can't pay staff enough. Low pay triggers high turnover. And while high-quality child care is expensive, most parents can't afford to pay the full cost.

"There aren't many subsidies available to parents," Geringswald says. "This influences the lack of access to care."

Geringswald also studied how communities elsewhere in the world organize and finance early childhood education. Singapore, for example, offers care for young children through its public school system. "That has great outcomes for children, it's easy for parents, and it helps children transition to school more easily," she said.

The province of Quebec funds child care centers directly. "The fees are capped for parents, who pay only about \$8 a day," Geringswald said. In France, parents have a variety of care options for very young children. "But at three years old, all children are enrolled in free preschool that's part of the education system."

Based on these and other observations, Geringswald is assembling recommendations for better ways to fund and manage early childhood education in New York.

According to Geringswald, the biggest takeaway from the research is that the early years are critical to a child's development. "Child care is also incredibly important in helping communities recover from situations like the one we're going through right now," she added. "If there was ever a time to implement child care policies, it's definitely now."

WOMEN'S FUND LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE CHANGES A Warm Welcome to Rachel Coker!



RACHEL COKER

Rachel is director of research advancement at Binghamton University. She edits an e-newsletter and a magazine dedicated to scholarly work on campus and writes media releases on topics ranging from physics findings to faculty novels. Her news writing and publications have earned recognition from the SUNY Council for University Advancement and the Council for Advancement and Support of Education. She is a past president of the University

Research Magazine Association and immediate past president of Temple Concord, a Reform Jewish congregation in Binghamton. Rachel earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Rochester and a master's degree from the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. She has served as an adjunct instructor of journalism at Binghamton University and at SUNY Broome Community College.

Heartfelt thanks and a fond farewell to two long-time and dedicated members of the Leadership Committee; Kate Fitzgerald and Jenn Small. Best wishes and gratitude for all you have done to enhance the lives of women and girls in the region.

RBG Masks Benefit Women's Causes

It started as a simple plan to make face masks as gifts for a dozen friends. That's all Margherita Rossi had in mind when she ordered a yard of fabric printed with the image of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's face and her famous dissent collar. Then, on September 18, Ginsburg died.

Rossi posted a picture of the fabric on Facebook, with a note about her sewing project to honor the feminist icon. The news went viral. Friends—way more than a dozen—asked for masks. Then friends of friends. Rossi ordered more fabric. Requests kept pouring in.

"Right before Thanksgiving, I had finished all of the orders," said Rossi, vice chair of the Women's Fund's Leadership Committee. She'd sewn 511 masks.

To cover her time and the cost of materials, Rossi charged \$5 per mask. It wasn't hard to find a good use for the more than \$2,500 she received. "I decided I was going to donate the money to the Women's Fund, and to the Women's Institute at SUNY Broome," she said. She also steered some of the proceeds to the Community Foundation's new *Racial Justice and Equity Fund*.

While supporting worthy programs and paying tribute to Ginsburg, the masks also sparked a sense of camaraderie among like minded people who bumped into one another in stores around town, Rossi said. "People were wearing their masks, and meeting other people who had the masks on, and making friends."