

## Annual Breakfast Marks Women's Fund's 20th Anniversary

There'll be a great deal to celebrate when the Women's Fund convenes for our annual breakfast on Wednesday, June 1. Please join us at the Doubletree in Binghamton, from 7:30 to 9:30 a.m., to help mark the Fund's 20th anniversary, look ahead to the future and enjoy a talk by Hali Lee on women and philanthropy.

Hali Lee is the founding partner of the consulting practice Radiant Strategies. A co-founder of the Donors of Color Network, she also served on the co-design team that created Philanthropy Together, an organization that promotes the creation of giving circles. Lee herself founded the Asian Women Giving Circle, which raises resources for Asian American women who use the arts to promote social change in their communities in New York City.

"If you start talking about diversity in philanthropy, and what it means to raise money from women, and from people of color, she's nationally one of the people on that subject," said Rachel Coker, who chairs the Women's Fund's Special Events Committee.

The Women's Fund was especially intent on highlighting the subject of women and philanthropy at

this special anniversary breakfast. Often in the past, the Fund has invited a speaker to give a keynote address and then determined what the topic would be. "This year we started with the idea that we wanted someone who would address women and philanthropy in a meaningful way," Coker said. "Then we brainstormed on who could bring us that message in a way that would be compelling, different and interesting."

Suggested by Angela Riley, another member of the Special Events Committee, Lee was one of the group's first choices. Since Lee doesn't participate in a regular speakers' circuit, the group wasn't sure whether she would even consider doing this type of presentation, Coker said. "So we were especially thrilled, and it was especially gratifying, when she gave us a very fast 'Yes.'"

Also gratifying is the thought of how much the Women's Fund has grown in the past two decades. Starting with a \$100,000 fundraising challenge in 2002, the Fund surpassed the \$1 million mark in 2021. We've made \$272,351 in grants to more than 100 projects and programs that support or empower women and girls. Throughout our five-county region, we've helped to address issues such as: women's health; financial literacy for women; sexual violence and domestic abuse; character and leadership development for girls; mental health; parenting skills; internet safety; and more.

Another cause for celebration (we hope!) will be our return to an in-person event after COVID-19 forced us to cancel the breakfast in 2020 and hold it on line in 2021. Given the up-and-down nature of the pandemic, of course, we can't guarantee that we'll be able to gather. But we're keeping our fingers crossed.

"Having lived through the past two years in the ways we did, it will be really special for us all to be in the same room, experiencing the same thing together, and to be able to see each others' faces," Coker said.

### The Women's Fund

520 Columbia Drive, Suite 100  
Johnson City, NY 13790

Phone (607) 772-6773

[donorswhocare.org](http://donorswhocare.org)



### Women's Fund Leadership:

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Ann Machlin

Jacqueline Newman

Kimberly L. Peabody, PhD

Angela C. Riley, PharmD

Jenn Small

Jackie Stapleton-Durham

Marcia J. Steinbrecher



Tickets to the program, including a full breakfast, are \$50 per person (\$30 per person for students). We hope to see you there!

### WEDNESDAY, JUNE 1, 2022

The Doubletree, 225 Water Street, Binghamton

Sign-in begins at 7:30 a.m.

Breakfast buffet starts at 7:45 a.m.

Call 607-772-6773 by May 20, 2022 to reserve your seat. Visa/MC accepted by phone or online at [www.donorswhocare.org](http://www.donorswhocare.org).

# Film Remembers Women Lost in 1913 Fire

**R**uth Shove. Edith Chernoff. Mary Smith. Mary Creegan. One by one, faces in grainy black and white photographs resolve on screen into sharp portraits and then fill with color as though with life.

That's the final sequence in "The Devil's Fire," a documentary by Brian Frey that debuted on December 6 on WSKG-TV. The film tells the story of the 1913 fire at the Binghamton Clothing Company that took the lives of 31 workers, nearly all of them women.

Frey used part of a \$2,277 grant from the Women's Fund to restore photos of the fire's victims, turning damaged relics—the only images of those people available today—into vivid tokens of each person's humanity. "I didn't want to show those old pictures, because I didn't think they did justice to the women who were in the fire and died," said Frey, WSKG's director of operations and special projects.

WSKG is also using the grant to create an online gallery of



photos and activities, letting participants walk through a series of "rooms" to learn the story of "The Devil's Fire." The gallery will be an educational resource, available free of charge to teachers who use the documentary in their classes.

Students growing up in the region today probably don't hear much about the Binghamton Clothing Company fire unless it comes up in the classroom. That wasn't always the case. The

disaster made a huge impact, and not just a local one. "Syracuse, Utica, Albany—all the newspapers sent people to Binghamton to talk to the survivors," said Frey, who combed the archives of those papers for details he could use to tell the story.

Frey also found a wealth of information in the 600-page transcript of the Broome County Coroner's inquest into the fire. He had been searching for that document for several years, but it seemed to have vanished completely. Then, a couple of years ago, a phone call to the Broome County Clerk's office changed everything. "He told me they had found the report by chance at an offsite storage facility in Vestal in 2018," Frey said.

While memories of the tragedy have faded, the impact of the event has not, since the Binghamton fire played a big role in the movement for factory safety. It came three years after the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire, which killed 146 garment workers in New York City. "There were a lot of laws going through the New York Senate at the time," Frey said. But not until after the Binghamton fire did legislators in Albany finally push through new regulations. "It triggered safety laws in other states

all over the country, too, especially when it comes to fire escapes, fire extinguishers and sprinkler systems in factories with more than 25 employees," he said.

Frey, who has made many films on the history of our region, had wanted to make a documentary on the Binghamton fire for years. "But I didn't feel I had enough visual footage," he said. "And the big thing was the photographs." By supporting the restoration of historical photos, the grant from the Women's Fund helped make the project feasible at last.

Members of the Women's Fund's Grants Committee especially liked the educational component of WSKG's project, said Ann Machlin, who helps evaluate grant proposals as part of that group.

Choosing projects for grants from the Women's Fund is always challenging. "There's never enough money to cover all the wonderful proposals that come our way," Machlin said. "We try to reach so many different women in all different walks of life." The committee works hard and conscientiously to make its recommendations, she said. "We care a lot about making sure that the grantees are the very most deserving."

## Welcome to New Members of the Leadership Committee!

We're excited to welcome a record number of new members to the Leadership Committee.

**Jenn Small**, newly retired from AVRE, rejoins us after a year hiatus. New to the Leadership Committee are **Kimberly L. Peabody, PhD**, director, health promotion & prevention services, deputy Title IX coordinator, prevention & training at Binghamton University; **Myra J. Bobo-Pickens**, regional human resources business partner at Advance Auto Parts; **Ebony L. Hattoh**, founder and owner at Gilead Media and Marketing; and **Julia Hepworth Jurena**, retired from Broome DSS and currently community schools coordinator with Whitney Point schools.

As our newest members join the Leadership Committee, we bid a fond farewell to **Margherita Rossi**, **Nicole Rouhana**, and **Sandra Johnson**, all active members of the committee and dedicated to making the region a better place for women and girls to live and thrive.

Thanks to all for their commitment; we will miss them!