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 online 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.
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!