

The power of pooled resources

Women and Girls Fund of the Mid-Shore awards grant money to 16 organizations

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EASTON — “The power of pooled resources” is the motto of the Women and Girls Fund of the Mid-Shore, and they have lived up to that motto for the past 15 years.

Monday, April 24, marked the organization’s 15th annual grants and award luncheon, where 16 community organizations received grant funding during an event at The Milestone in Easton. Representatives from the 16 Mid-Shore nonprofits accepted checks totaling \$43,259.

These donations will bring the fund’s overall grant total to \$507,021.51, awarded to 82 organizations whose programs benefit women and girls in one or more of the five Mid-Shore counties of Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne’s and Talbot.

The grants went to two new applicants and 14 nonprofits that have been awarded Women and Girls Fund grants at least once before.

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PHOTO BY DENAE SPIERING

The Women and Girls Fund held its 15th annual grants and awards luncheon, Monday, April 24, at the Milestone in Easton. Pictured are representatives of the 16 recipient organizations of the Women and Girls Fund’s annual grants: Chesapeake College Foundation, Chesapeake Multicultural Resource Center, Compass Regional Hospice, Destined to Rise, Echo Hill Outdoor School, For All Seasons Inc., Horizons of Kent and Queen Anne’s, Imagination Library of Talbot County, Ladies of Nia Inc., Partners in Care, Rebuilding Together Caroline County, Rebuilding Together Kent County, Rising Above Disease, Talbot Mentors, Talbot Partnership and Tilghman Area Youth Association.

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Each year, the Women and Girls Fund accepts grant applications from community organizations from throughout the Mid-Shore, and has, during a previous year, received up to 30 applications. The women who run the organization said they strive to meet the needs of all applicants, whether through funding or meeting their needs in other ways.

“One year, a women’s shelter was requesting funding for furniture,” said Beth Spurry, treasure of the Women and Girls Fund. “We were able to furnish their shelter with furniture from our own homes.”

“It’s not always about giving money,” Spurry said. “It’s about true mentoring, making connections and elevating them to self-sustaining organizations in the community.”

This year, the group only turned down two applicants, but Spurry said they never completely turn them away. The group will hand those

applications over to the Mid-Shore Community Foundation for possible funding, or they will connect them with other groups that may be able to help them.

Spurry said helping with networking is something the group does for its grant recipients, as well.

“We try to figure out a way to link groups together that may benefit from another,” Spurry said.

Talli Oxnam, president of the Women and Girls Fund, said one group may need help writing grants, whereas another might excel at it. “Making those connections can be beneficial,” Oxnam said.

The Women and Girls Fund was created in 2003 by Alice Ryan, and has raised more than \$1 million in the past 15 years. This year, the 16 recipients of the Women and Girls Fund received anywhere between \$200 and \$4,360 in funding. In addition to this money, four selected applicants also received a Daisy Fund Grant.

The Daisy Fund was created to teach the next generation about philanthropy.

Together, with the members of the Women and Girls Fund, the Daisy Fund members choose which groups they feel may need extra funding.

Spurry said it gives young girls the opportunity to meet the needs of these community groups that represent other children.

The Women and Girls Fund recipients were: Chesapeake College Foundation, Chesapeake Multicultural Resource Center, Compass Regional Hospice, Destined to Rise, Echo Hill Outdoor School, For All Seasons Inc., Horizons of Kent and Queen Anne’s, Imagination Library of Talbot County, Ladies of Nia Inc., Partners in Care, Rebuilding Together Caroline County, Rebuilding Together Kent County, Rising Above Disease, Talbot Mentors, Talbot Partnership and Tilghman Area Youth Association.

Recipients of the Daisy Fund were Compass Regional Hospice, Destined to Rise, Imagination Library of Talbot County and Tilghman Area Youth Association.

Tilghman Area Youth As-

sociation was awarded the largest Women and Girls Fund grant, and together with the Daisy Fund, the group was awarded a little more than \$5,000.

“It is a real honor,” said Ann Farley, executive director of Tilghman Area Youth Association. “We are delighted.”

Farley said the organization plans to use the grant money to help fund its after-school program’s part-time leadership staff.

“We really try to reach out to the whole community through the kids we see in the after-school program,” Farley said.

The program makes a real impact on the students that attend, Farley said. Cassidy Stewart was one of those children, and now she is in college at Salisbury University studying education. She also is part of the leadership staff for the after-school program.

“The program had such an impact on me,” Stewart said. “It made me want to be a part of the school system when I grew up.”

The Women and Girls Fund also honored two

women from the Mid-Shore who have gone above and beyond to serve their communities. Each year, the group picks a winner for the Sheryl V. Kerr Award and the Women and Girls Fund Award. This year’s awards were presented by Del. Johnny Mautz, R-37B-Talbot, and Sen. Addie Eckardt, R-37-Mid-Shore.

The Women and Girls Fund Award is valued at \$500, and went to Ellen Rajacich of Easton. Rajacich has been volunteering as a fitness instructor at the YMCA of the Chesapeake since 1959.

“It’s such an honor to present you with this award,” Mautz said. “To be able to just thank you personally for everything you have done for our community.”

Previous recipients of this award are the late Lois S. Duffey, Harriet S. Critchlow, Sandra W. King, Maria Boria, Sister Patricia Gamgort, Tracy Davenport, Sandra Redd, Sara Jane Davidson, Karen Murphy Jensen, Kathleen Francis, Maureen Jacobs, Janet Pfeffer, Joy Price, Nancy Wilson,

Mary Lou McAllister, Diana Mautz and Kathy Weaver.

The Sheryl V. Kerr Award is valued at \$2,500, and went to Cheryl Hughes. Hughes is a breast cancer survivor and the founder of Team Wonder Woman, Saving Second Base and is accredited with raising more than \$350,000 for breast cancer.

“I would have never expected anything like this,” Hughes said. “Every year, we try to do as much as we can for the people we are fighting for.”

Previous recipients of the Sheryl V. Kerr Award are Maria D’Arcy and Estela Ramirez.

Mautz and Eckardt also awarded the Women and Girls Fund with a certificate of appreciation from the Senate and House of Delegates for its many years of service to the Mid-Shore.

“We deeply appreciate what you do,” Eckardt said. “You all are one of our strongest assets.”

For more information about the Women and Girls Fund, call 410-770-8347, email info@womenandgirlsfund.org or visit www.womenandgirlsfund.org.