

women's
FUND

OF MISSISSIPPI

IT
TAKES
YOU

The Women's Fund is able to improve the lives of women and girls only because of the great generosity of our community. THANK YOU to the many people who brought us to this point.

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YOU supported our advocacy work on two issues, payday lending reform and prevention of domestic violence. Because of YOU the number of people who understand the detrimental effects of payday lending has greatly increased and because of YOU women in our state are safer now than they were in 2009. Please read about our 2010 and 2011 grantees and know that YOU made these grants happen and be proud of what your contributions have made possible! As you know, every change we make requires partners. It really does take YOU!

Seetha Srinivasan, *2011 Board chair*
Carol B. Penick, *Executive Director*

The Women's Fund of Mississippi and the women we serve deeply appreciate your generosity.

ADVOCACY

Teen Pregnancy Prevention

Teen pregnancy is a complex problem with complex solutions. Because teen births are often a consequence of and a cause of poverty, we know there is no magic bullet to reduce the teen birth rate. We do know, however, that reducing the teen birth rate is one of the most effective ways to improve child well-being and reduce persistent child poverty. It should come as no surprise that Mississippi has the highest teen birth rate and the highest child poverty rate.

Despite the complexity of the issue, research indicates several strategies for reducing the teen birth rate. These strategies include: implementing evidence-based sex education in public schools, ensuring access to family planning services, and increasing educational and work opportunities for low income teens.

Through grantmaking and advocacy, the Women's Fund is dedicated to raising awareness of the devastating impact of teen births on women, children, and families. Our current advocacy initiative includes commissioning research from the Mississippi Economic Policy Center on the economic cost of teen births for each county in Mississippi. This data will be used to raise awareness of the impact of teen births on our state's well-being, as well as offer research-based policy solutions.

Payday Lending

The Women's Fund is committed to raising public awareness about the devastating impact of payday lending on Mississippians. We are working in partnership with other organizations—the Mississippi Center for Justice, the Mississippi Economic Policy Center, and the faith community—to address this issue at the local and state level. This coalition, Mississippians for Fair Lending, is committed to bringing about policy changes that would cap the interest rate for payday loans at 36 percent.

Women's Fund advocacy activities related to payday lending reform in 2010 and 2011:

- With coalition and community partners, the Fund organized 5 community meetings on payday lending around the state in the fall of 2010.
- Op-ed campaign: 1 op-ed by Executive Director Carol Penick, 1 op-ed by Women's Fund Board Member Jackie Bailey, and several earned media quotes by Women's Fund staff in *The Clarion Ledger* on payday lending.
- Donor gatherings in each of the 5 communities we visited.
- Editorial Board meetings at the newspapers where we hosted community meetings.

Domestic Violence

In January 2010, donors and friends of the Women's Fund of Mississippi participated in a letter-writing campaign and met with elected officials to express their support for three specific domestic violence-related bills. Donors, Board Members, and friends hand-delivered over 30 letters to legislators and made dozens of phone calls in support of these bills. **All three domestic violence bills supported by the Women's Fund of Mississippi were signed into law by Governor Haley Barbour.** These bills included:

- House Bill (HB) 657/ Senate Bill (SB) 2344 will ban insurance companies from considering domestic violence a pre-existing condition.
- HB 769/ SB 2923 will include strangulation of a person in a domestic relationship as "aggravated domestic violence" and include harsher penalties for offenders.
- HB 1309/ SB 2961 will strengthen the stalking law and penalties.

GRANTMAKING

The overall goal of the Women's Fund grantmaking program is economic self-sufficiency for women and girls in Mississippi. We believe that if a woman is economically secure, her family and community will also be economically secure. A woman's economic security is directly impacted by her child care choices, her reproductive health, and her ability to remain free from violence. The Women's Fund supports organizations working to produce social change by and for women in Mississippi. Instead of funding direct service work, we are most interested in funding programs that get to the "root" of the problem, often through public policy and advocacy. We constantly evaluate our work and require all grantees to participate in an online evaluation tool, Making the Case.

2010 GRANT PROGRAMS

Coordinated Community Response at Gulf Coast Women's Center for Nonviolence

Ruth's story illustrates the combined impact of the Women's Fund grant to the Gulf Coast Women's Center for Nonviolence and the advocacy work by the Fund.

Ruth went to the emergency room this summer after her husband beat and strangled her. The emergency room nurse on duty had recently been instructed to start checking for strangulation on all suspected domestic violence cases due to a new law. As a result, Ruth's abuser was charged with felony aggravated domestic assault. Ruth's story may seem straightforward but it is the culmination of years of hard work by grantees, advocates, and elected officials.

The Women's Fund and key violence-prevention organizations participated in a successful campaign in 2010 to pass three domestic violence-related bills through the Mississippi Legislature, including the new strangulation law referenced above. Without changes to the law, Ruth's abuser would have been charged with a misdemeanor.



"The Women's Fund of Mississippi will be the preeminent organization for positive change in the state within a decade. I'm proud to support it and can't imagine any woman not wanting to be part of it."

- Jane Hiatt

New laws are meaningless unless people know about them, so the Women's Fund funded the Coordinated Community Response (CCR) team at the Gulf Coast Women's Center for Nonviolence. The CCR team organizes trainings for hospitals (including the emergency room Ruth attended), churches, and law enforcement so that they can work together to protect women and families from violence. Without the work of the Women's Fund grantee, no one at the hospital would have known that strangulation within a domestic relationship is now a felony.

\$120,000 in grantmaking awarded in 2010-11

Mississippi Low Income Child Care Initiative

Fact: A parent leaving welfare for work is 82% more likely to still be employed after 2 years if she has subsidized child care.

The Mississippi Low Income Child Care Initiative is working to ensure that our state's low income working families have access to quality and affordable child care. Subsidized child care certificates are a terrific benefit for working parents. Take an example of a single mother working at minimum wage (\$15,080/year). If she has 2 children (ages 1 and 3), her child care costs will take 53% of her entire income. If she is lucky enough to get a child care certificate from the Department of Human Services, her child care costs will go from \$665/month down to \$65/month. As this example illustrates, child care certificates are the work support that makes the biggest financial difference for a low income family moving toward economic self-sufficiency.

Reproductive Health Planning Grant at Moore Community House

Why does Mississippi have the highest teen birth rate?

To better understand the complex reasons for teen pregnancy, the Women's Fund made a grant to Moore Community House (MCH) to conduct a comprehensive reproductive health needs assessment in Biloxi and Gulfport. MCH hired a researcher to conduct interviews, focus groups, and surveys of low income teens and women. The researcher also met with healthcare professionals, women's groups, school nurses, parents, students, mental health professionals, and advocates to better understand access to and availability of basic health care services. The final work product is a needs assessment that provides the most recent statistics on women's health and teen pregnancy, as well as policy recommendations and a plan of action. The Women's Fund plans to use this report as the basis for further advocacy work around the topic of teen pregnancy prevention.

"When women move forward, the entire community moves with them."

- Shawna Davie



Children's Justice Center at University of Mississippi Medical Center

Fact: Child abuse cases require the careful attention and cooperation of trained legal and medical professionals.

With a grant from the Women's Fund, the Children's Justice Center conducted an inter-disciplinary seminar for law, medical, and graduate level social work students. The course brought together future lawyers and medical professionals to learn a common language about child abuse and issues that affect abused and neglected children. Students also completed a public policy project that studied the relationship between child maltreatment and unlicensed child care in Mississippi. The students presented their recommendations to a group of Mississippi legislators, including one of the original authors of the 1990 law that aimed to regulate child care centers. The legislator was shocked to learn the state was not adequately regulating child care centers according to the 1990 law and that the majority of in-home providers are unknown to the state and not tracked by any state agency.



"The Women's Fund is a group of strong, inspiring women who strive to improve the

lives of women and girls in Mississippi, even if it means challenging the way 'it's always been done.'"

- Amie Whittington

Immigration Clinic at Catholic Charities

Nancy Sanchez's story illustrates the impact of the Immigration Clinic, a 2010 grantee of the Women's Fund.

Nancy Sanchez, a mother of 4 children and a native of Mexico, moved to the United States to follow her husband. Although the domestic abuse was bad while in Mexico, the abuse became unbearable and more frequent in the United States. Nancy did not know what to do or where to go for help. Her husband threatened her with deportation if she reported the abuse.

With assistance from a church leader Nancy was referred to the Immigration Clinic at Catholic Charities. Using comprehensive services, the Clinic met with Nancy and informed her of her rights and assisted her in navigating a pathway to legal status away from her abuser. Nancy is now self-sufficient, providing a home for herself and her children, with gainful employment and a workable use of the English language. Through her own strength and the assistance of the Immigration Clinic, Nancy is a successful contributing community member.

In addition to working directly with individuals, the Clinic educates the public and law enforcement about the unique needs of immigrant women who are victims of domestic violence.

2011 GRANT PROGRAMS

Creating Healthy and Responsible Teens (C.H.A.R.T.), Mississippi First

Fact: Research shows that teens are more likely to delay sexual activity and use contraception when they do become sexually active if they receive sex education with information about abstinence and contraception. Evaluations of publicly funded abstinence-only programs have repeatedly shown no positive changes in sexual behaviors over time.

With a \$20,000 grant from the Women's Fund, Mississippi First is traveling to local school districts in counties with the highest teen birth rates and advocating for the adoption and implementation of evidence-based, age-appropriate, and medically accurate sex education programs. As of June 2011, three school boards in counties with the highest teen birth rates voted to adopt an evidence-based sex education policy. This is the first time any school district in Mississippi has formally adopted a sex education policy that endorses "abstinence-plus" and not "abstinence-only." An abstinence-plus curriculum urges abstinence but also provides information about contraception for students who are already sexually active or become sexually active.

Batterer's Intervention Program (BIP), Center for Violence Prevention

"I'm still wrong for what I did. But I'm still proud of what I've accomplished through some hard work. It is hard work. It's hard going home and facing yourself because you know what you're looking at and you don't like what you see."
— James, a participant in the BIP program.

The Duluth Model Batterer's Intervention Program (BIP) is an innovative, evidence-based model that teaches offenders alternatives to coercive, controlling, and abusive behavior in intimate



**Women in Construction
Moore Community House**

Photo: Elizabeth Rappaport

relationships. Of the 187 men (and a dozen women) who have entered the BIP program, only 2 have re-offended. The BIP program is only available to men and women offenders who aren't repeat offenders and/or convicted of felony domestic violence. Participants in the BIP program must pay for the cost of the sessions (24 sessions at \$25 each). When offered BIP as an alternative to jail, every offender has opted for BIP. The Women's Fund grant has been used to expand the BIP program to rural Yazoo and Copiah counties.

Fostering Mississippi Youth Connections, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) Mississippi

Fact: Girls who age out of foster care without continued support or a plan of higher education often end up engaging in risky behaviors that lead to pregnancy, homelessness, substance abuse, and exposure to violence.

CASA is addressing this problem by creating the Mississippi Foster Care Action Network. This Network will provide current and former foster youth with the opportunity to educate communities and policy makers about the unique needs of girls served by and aging out of Mississippi's child welfare system. This evidence-based model of youth development is an innovative approach allowing youth to develop leadership skills and leverage passion and expertise into measurable outcomes to improve the child welfare system. The Network will increase public and political awareness of the needs of foster care youth, which will result in better practices and policies within organizations that support Mississippi's child welfare system.

Women in Construction, Moore Community House

Abigail's story illustrates the impact of Women in Construction, a 2011 grantee of the Women's Fund.

Abigail was unemployed, could not find affordable housing in Gulfport, and facing homelessness when she enrolled in Women in Construction. Through Women in Construction, Abigail learned the construction trade, received quality child care, and became empowered by her job skills and income. Abigail now makes \$17.00 an hour as a welder.

Women in Construction (WinC) trains women in the construction trade so that they can attain economic self-sufficiency. Since its inception in 2007, WinC has graduated over 100 women, with job placement rates over 60%. An entry level carpenter/general laborer makes about \$10 an hour, several dollars above minimum wage. The Women's Fund grant is being used to support a Program Coordinator position and for grassroots advocacy and public awareness related to nontraditional employment for women.

The Women's Fund of Mississippi is the only grantmaking and advocacy organization in Mississippi entirely dedicated to funding programs that improve the lives of women and girls statewide.

Our Mission

The Women's Fund of Mississippi is dedicated to improving the lives of women and girls by promoting social change and economic self-sufficiency through advocacy and strategic grantmaking.

Our Theory of Social Change

When women are economically secure, safe, and healthy, then families and communities are economically secure, safe, and healthy.

Our Background

A group of women started the Women's Fund as a field-of-interest fund within the Community Foundation of Greater Jackson in 2002. In April 2009, the Women's Fund became an independent nonprofit, separate from the Community Foundation of Greater Jackson. The Fund has since expanded its work to include the entire state, not just the Jackson area.

In almost eight years of existence, the Women's Fund has received gifts in excess of \$1 million. Like mutual funds, the Women's Fund of Mississippi expects a return on its investment. Instead of financial gain, the return on an investment in the Women's Fund is in human capital - the transformation of the lives of women and girls and lasting impact on the communities in which they live.

Our Guiding Principles

We are **ADVOCATES**, catalysts for transformation in the lives of women and girls, monitoring public discourse, educating, sharing information, and supporting policies to achieve meaningful change.

We strive for **SOCIAL JUSTICE**, promoting equal access to opportunity and to equity in all aspects of life.

We believe in **INCLUSIVENESS**, embracing diversity reflective of Mississippi's population, welcoming and valuing different perspectives and opinions.

We believe in **ACCOUNTABILITY**, through transparency and informed, responsive use of our resources in achieving our mission.

We believe in **SUSTAINABILITY** for The Women's Fund, through fiscal responsibility and organizational strength, stewarding resources to meet the unique needs of women and girls.

Why do we focus our grantmaking on women and girls?

Mississippi has been ranked as one of the "worst states for women" by the Institute for Women's Policy Research in 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002, and 2006 (every year studied). The Women's Fund focuses on women and girls to reverse this grim statistic.

Less than 7% of philanthropic dollars nationwide go to programs that support women and girls. However, we know that women control 51% of the nation's wealth and make 83% of all consumer purchases. The Women's Fund puts the decision-making power in the hands of women in order to change the face of philanthropy.



www.womensfundms.org