Grant shields child victims in aftermath of abuse

Sexual assault or abuse is tragic at any age, but it is especially devastating for children. Yet nearly 70 percent of reported sexual assault cases involve juveniles under the age of 18, and a full one-third of victims are 12 or younger, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

But the nightmare doesn’t end once the crime is over. Child victims and their families must endure forensic interviews, physical exams, court cases, and the psychological trauma that often occurs in the weeks and months after an attack.

Fortunately, those in Summit County do not have to go through this ordeal alone. Since 2001, Akron Children’s Hospital and Victim Assistance Program have teamed up to provide an advocate for child victims and their families.

With the help of a $7,000 grant from the Women’s Endowment Fund last year, the advocate was able to serve more than 340 families, providing immediate crisis intervention and ongoing mental health referrals for the child and non-offending family members.

The advocate’s job starts when a referral is made from the Summit County Children Services Board or local law enforcement, said VAP Office Manager Deb Sheers. At that time, the child is taken to the hospital for a forensic interview, and the advocate talks with the parent or guardian to explain the roles of each person involved and the kinds of questions that will be asked. The advocate also observes the examination from behind one-way glass with the detective and children’s services specialist.

“This multi-disciplinary team approach minimizes how many times the child victim has to relive the trauma of the event,” Sheers said. “(Afterward), most victims suffer from many issues, including post-traumatic stress disorder, low self-esteem, depression, anxiety and anorexia.”

In addition, Sheers said child victims of sexual abuse often turn to self-mutilation, drugs and alcohol, promiscuity, or even suicide to alleviate the lingering pain. For this reason, “Any child that has been sexually assaulted or abused needs a victim advocate,” she said.

“The advocate will attend the hearings with or without the family and keep family members informed at each stage of the process.”

Throughout the process, the advocate follows up with the family to make sure the child is cared for and has access to a trustworthy adult figure.

This year, a $10,000 grant from the Women’s Endowment Fund will help the advocate’s work continue. This is the fourth year the fund has prioritized the physical safety of women and girls by supporting organizations like Victim Assistance Program.

“They do a wonderful job of shielding children who have had their whole lives turned upside down by a crime committed against them,” said board member Anita Davis. “It’s a hand-holding process for the most vulnerable people in our society.”

See page 3 for a full list of 2010 grants
President’s Letter

Everyone can leave a legacy. That’s the message Dr. Renee Powell delivered March 24 to a group of high school girls gathered for a tea sponsored by the Women’s Endowment Fund. Each year, the fund holds an afternoon tea that gives local girls the chance to interact with the philanthropist chosen to speak at the fund’s annual event.

This year, 40 young women with diverse backgrounds talked with the former professional golfer about how she overcame discrimination and excelled as a professional athlete, educator and civic leader.

A number of the young women who attended the event expressed sincere thanks for their time with Renee. Braisha Owens, a senior at Firestone High School, said it best: “I was in awe of Ms. Powell. She provided us with great advice on how to pursue our passion and to serve our community. She is an inspiration.”

Later in the evening, Renee addressed 270 individuals at the 17th annual For Women, Forever dinner celebration. She discussed how her parents prepared her to “live and give” on the golf course and in the community by teaching her to be courageous, committed, compassionate and caring. These values helped Renee excel in doing what made her happy: playing golf and helping others. I am grateful that the Women’s Endowment Fund board and its supporters are all rowing in the same direction when it comes to making a positive difference in the lives of others.

Together, we have the ability to help more women and girls than any of us could ever do alone. When we reach out to others, we strengthen our community.

On that note, the Women’s Endowment Fund will launch its annual Mother’s Day card campaign this month. We invite you to make a donation to the fund in honor of any woman who has touched your life in a significant way. In exchange for your donation, your loved one will receive a beautiful card thanking her for her contribution to others. We will accept donations through May 5.

I speak for everyone on the advisory board when I wish a happy Mother’s Day to the women who work each day to “live and give.”

Tracy Carter, president
Women’s Endowment Fund

2009-2010 Women’s Endowment Fund Advisory Board

Back: Karen Lefton; Brittany Zaehringer; Capt. Sylvia Trundle; Kathy Booth; Barb Greene; Connie Krauss; Katie Smucker; Dianne Newman; Anita Davis; Front: Angelina Milo, treasurer; Tracy Carter, president; Ruthie George, secretary; Not pictured: Sandy Auburn; Judge Eve Belfance; Diane Bray; Louise Harvey; Charlene Reed; Maureen Van Duser.
**For Women, Forever**

**Annual event features women’s golf legend Renee Powell**

It didn’t take long for Renee Powell to hit it off with the crowd. But then, that’s par for the course for the 63-year-old former professional golfer and public speaker.

Powell addressed nearly 300 people during the Women’s Endowment Fund’s annual dinner, “For Women, Forever,” held March 24. There, she shared her experiences as one of only three African-American women to ever play on the Ladies Professional Golf Association Tour.

During her 13 years on the tour, Powell was often refused service at restaurants and even threatened with violence. But despite those trials, she persevered and became a role model for athletes across the country.

Today, Powell is known for her mentoring work with young women. In addition to conducting programs in Cleveland and her hometown of East Canton, Powell has also traveled to Africa to teach golf at orphanages in Rwanda and similar countries.

“Golf has been a tool to help me give back to many people in many different ways,” Powell said. “My father believed in getting everyone involved in the game of golf ... and I, like my parents, have been committed to making a difference in the world.”

Earlier in the day, Powell spoke to a group of high school girls about the importance of philanthropy at the local level.

“Every one of us has the power to make a difference,” she said. “There are so many things you can do to make your community better each and every day.”

The girls had the opportunity to practice their putting one-on-one with Powell, and several also attended the dinner. There, they witnessed a proclamation given by Summit County Councilwoman Ilene Shapiro recognizing the Women’s Endowment Fund’s contributions to the community.

“The fund continues to serve as a vital leader and support for programming designed to protect and promote the interests of women and girls,” Shapiro declared.

Akron Community Foundation President and CEO John T. Petures Jr. echoed Shapiro’s comments, telling fund supporters: “Your leadership, your generosity, and the commitment you have made to women and girls is making a difference.”

Powell concluded by issuing a challenge to members of the audience: “Define what you want your legacy to be,” she said. “We have the choice to be takers or givers. We can choose to make a positive difference or a negative difference. What choice will you make?”

**WEF Mother’s Day cards**

The eighth annual Women’s Endowment Fund Mother’s Day campaign will kick off this month.

Donors can make tribute or memorial gifts to the Women’s Endowment Fund in honor of the special women they know. Each honoree will receive a special Mother’s Day card informing her that a gift was made in her name, though the amount of the gift will not be disclosed.

Last year’s campaign raised a total of $7,358, and honorees received lovely floral Mother’s Day cards.

Would you like to honor the special women in your life? Call Akron Community Foundation at 330-376-8522 and request a card. Please make your gift by May 5 to ensure your honorees receive their greetings before Mother’s Day.

**2010 Women’s Endowment Fund Grants**

- **Akron Community Service Center & Urban League**, for the ASSET program, which provides business and computer skills training to students of all ages, $10,000
- **Greenleaf Family Center**, to provide financial literacy workshops to residents living in the Battered Women’s Shelter’s transitional housing units, $8,500
- **Mustard Seed Development Center**, to support financial counseling and case management services for women and girls, $20,000
- **Rape Crisis Center**, for the Victim to Survivor program, which provides advocates for victims of sexual assault, $10,000
- **Shelter Care Inc.**, for Cowgirl U, a program providing at-risk girls with the peace and security found in nature, $5,500
- **Victim Assistance Program Inc.**, to support an advocate for child victims of abuse, $10,000
Women’s Endowment Fund of Akron Community Foundation
This newsletter is published semi-annually by Akron Community Foundation. The Women’s Endowment Fund is an affiliate of Akron Community Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

**Memorial & Tribute Giving**

For gifts received from Aug. 1, 2009, to Jan. 31, 2010

**Memorial gifts to the Women’s Endowment Fund:**
- Marie Ciccarone by Madeline Bozzelli
- Ann Kormushoff by Teri Parasson
- Barbara Mathews by Mr. & Mrs. James Gentile
- Cynthia Parish
- Lucy Melian by Roderick Linton and Belfance, LLP
- Dorothy Potts by Marna Lilliedale Becker
- Sandra Rossi by Marna Lilliedale Becker

**Tribute gifts to the Women’s Endowment Fund:**
- Jody Bacon by Susan Kruder
- Madeline Bozzelli by Ilene Shapiro & Kimberly Shapiro
- Ann Amer Brennan by Jody Bacon
- Marie E. Covington by Angelina L. Milo
- Kimberly Haws Falasco by Angelina L. Milo
- Rhonnie Gerin by Ilene & Robert Shapiro
- Linda Harshbarger by Carolyn Reed Hodge
- Susan Kruder by Jody Bacon
- Martha Maughn by Carolyn Reed Hodge
- Philip H. Maynard by Ilene Shapiro
- Sally Naret by Carolyn Reed Hodge
- Vivian Celeste Neal by Donae Eckert
- Renee Oberlin by Carolyn Reed Hodge
- Jan Parry by Jody Bacon
- Joan Reed by Carolyn Reed Hodge
- Steven Schmidt by Ilene Shapiro
- Deborah L. Smith by Cynthia D. Rudick, Ph.D.
- James & Janet White by Frank Kendall III
- Laurie Zuckerman by Laura & Robert Culp
- Brittany Grimes Zaehringer by Donae Eckert

The mission of the Women’s Endowment Fund of Akron Community Foundation is to provide grant funding to organizations and programs in the greater Akron area that support women and girls; to serve as a catalyst for needed projects; and to assist women in their growth as philanthropists.