Grants bring safety, camaraderie to Hmong women

Greater Akron is home to about 500-600 members of the Hmong, an ethnic group from the mountainous regions of China, Vietnam, Laos and Thailand. Following the Vietnam War and the Laotian Civil War, thousands of refugees resettled in the United States and other countries. Here in Akron, this culturally vibrant and tight-knit community took root and is now part of the city’s fabric.

However, despite successfully integrating into a new society, women in the Hmong community often still struggle to gain autonomy because of their culture’s patriarchal family structure, preventing women from reaching their full potential.

To address this issue, the Women’s Endowment Fund awarded a grant in 2014 to ASIA Inc. to create a needlework circle – known as a Paj Tshab Circle – for Hmong women in Akron. A second grant in 2015 enabled the Paj Tshab Circle to continue.

In addition to building relationships among Hmong women, the circle also gives ASIA staff the opportunity to share information with these women about healthy relationships and domestic violence prevention, Hmong and American cultural differences, citizenship, and community resources. This critical information is woven into the conversations and activities of the circle.

Kitty Leung, manager of children, youth and family services at ASIA, described the program’s impact on one woman, saying, “The camaraderie and support of her peers in the Paj Tshab Circle … provided her with emotional stability, self-confidence and the knowledge that others were there to support her.”

Learn more about this uplifting program by reading the full story at [www.akroncf.org/HmongGrant](http://www.akroncf.org/HmongGrant).

WEF welcomes new members to advisory board

This summer, the Women’s Endowment Fund welcomed six community leaders to its board. Laura DiCola, Pam Kanfer, Pamela Kiltau, Joy Malek Oldfield, Pamela Valentine and Bernett Williams were all appointed to their first three-year term.

Laura DiCola is the early childhood education strategy leader at Summit Education Initiative, where she is responsible for developing collaborative efforts dedicated to increasing school readiness and elementary reading success for children throughout Summit County.

Pam Kanfer is an educational therapist at The Lippman School, where for more than 36 years she has held numerous lay and professional positions, including school director, general studies and Hebrew teacher, and board president. As a dyslexia specialist, she also maintains a private practice.

Pamela Kiltau, CFP®, is vice president of private wealth management at Robert W. Baird & Co. She has been in the financial services industry for 40 years.
Fall is upon us with all of its glorious color, which reminds us of all the wonderful things we have to be thankful for this year. For the Women’s Endowment Fund, that includes our donors, who have helped us build a fund of almost $3 million, enabling us to support programs that benefit women and girls in our community in the impact areas of economic empowerment, safety from violence, and health and wellness.

Your continuing support is critical to the success of our mission and our ability to improve the lives of women and girls in our community. As you begin to think about the coming holidays and ways to honor your loved ones, think about making a contribution to WEF. All gifts are fully tax deductible and are invested and grown over time, so your gift today will continue to multiply for generations to come.

We would also like to thank Ms. Lynn Budnick and Access Inc. for hosting us for our annual board planning meeting in June and allowing us to tour their wonderful facility, which provides much-needed services to homeless women and children. Our meeting concluded with the adoption of our first strategic plan, which will guide us well into the future and help us identify and effectively respond to challenges and opportunities.

Please join us at our annual dinner on March 7, 2017, as we have a wonderful program planned and will also showcase our 2017 grant recipients. This is a great opportunity to network with other community members and learn more about how you can make a difference.

Finally, please contact us to learn more about any of our events, how you can get involved, and how you can make your gift count.

A wonderful fall and holiday season to you and yours,

Cindy Johnson, president
Women’s Endowment Fund

Save the Date

Nov. 15, 2016
Grant Application Deadline
If you are a nonprofit agency with a program that improves the health, safety, or economic empowerment of women and girls, be sure to submit your grant application by Tuesday, Nov. 15. A link to the application is available at www.akroncf.org/applyWEF.

Dec. 31, 2016
Year-End Giving Deadline
Last-minute gifts to the Women’s Endowment Fund can be made online until midnight on Dec. 31 at www.akroncf.org/give/WEF. For gifts of stock, transfers should be initiated by Dec. 19 to ensure year-end processing. See all the ways you can give at www.akroncf.org/WEFwaystogive.

March 7, 2017
Annual Dinner
Save the date for our next “For Women, Forever” annual dinner. This signature event will feature Savannah James, businesswoman, philanthropist, wife, mother, and founder of the I PROMIse Makeover. Be among the first to get details about the dinner by registering for our e-news at www.akroncf.org/WEFnews. Corporate and individual sponsorship opportunities range from $2,500 to $25,000. Learn more and become a sponsor now at www.regonline.com/ForWomenForever.

New Board continued
In addition to providing traditional advice and guidance, she helps clients pursue their objectives by building and managing their own personalized or defined strategies.

Joy Malek Oldfield is a judge on the Akron Municipal Court and presiding judge of the Akron Municipal Recovery Court. A Fellow of the Akron Bar Foundation and active member of the Akron Bar Association, Judge Oldfield has over 15 years of service to the local bar, including the Women in Law and Criminal Law sections.

Pamela Valentine is the director of community development for the Girl Scouts of North East Ohio. Prior to joining the Girl Scouts, she worked as a senior accountant at Lockheed Martin, where she oversaw an annual budget of more than $1 billion and served on the company’s Diversity Council.

Bernett Williams is the vice president of external affairs for Akron Children’s Hospital, where she leads the hospital’s community partnerships, government relations and community benefit strategies. She previously served as president and CEO of the Akron Urban League for nearly 15 years.

Read their complete biographies at www.akroncf.org/WEFboard.
Record-setting Mother’s Day gifts honor SHEroes

This year, WEF launched its newly branded Mother’s Day campaign, “Who is Your SHEro?”, and people all over Greater Akron honored the SHEroes in their lives with a gift to the Women’s Endowment Fund. The campaign raised a record $19,363! We’re grateful for your generous gifts, which will uplift women and girls in our community forever. Below are the mothers, grandmothers, aunts, sisters and friends you honored:

In memory of:

Elise M. Beattie, Winifred Bishop & Louise Hewell, Dorothy Critchfield, Ruth Dean, Ramona Ferguson, Ann Fiocca, Emma & Rosanna Garofalo, Shirley Garrett, Agnes Gorbach, Doris Hudson & Thelma Breaux, Josephine M. Jones, Marion K. Jones, Georgia King, Anna C. Kuhns, Beatrice Laatsch, Emily Mitson Lavy, Claudette Lester, Isabel Mascolo, Pauline May, Eloise Menendez, Cynthia Mernagh, Lynn Rodeman Metzger, Anna Mae Miller, Veda Nida, Dorothy Quirk, Beverly Schneider Smith, Helen Stallings, Dorothy Storm, Carolyn Baver Sveda, Ann Tutt, Dorthy Tyn dall, Shannon Wilkes, Landon Zuckerman

In honor of:


See a complete list of people who gave this year at www.akroncf.org/ WEFMothersDaygifts.
Women & Finances
On Monday, Sept. 19, WEF partnered with Akron Community Foundation and Fairport Asset Management to host Women Moving Millions, a free education program just for women. A panel of financial experts discussed strategies for building a financial plan, investing, charitable giving and more. It was a great opportunity to connect with like-minded women and learn how giving plays an important part in financial planning. Read all about the event and get free materials at www.akroncf.org/WEFmillions.