In September, the Women’s Endowment Fund convened a group of nearly 100 health and social service professionals to discuss issues related to infant mortality in Summit County. The 2017 Forum on Women and Girls, held at the Red Cross in Akron, brought together experts, service providers and community leaders to talk about the growing crisis and brainstorm potential solutions.

Experts from Summit County Public Health and the Minority Behavioral Health Group facilitated a conversation about the racial disparity between infant mortality rates in the African-American community and their white counterparts.

“Our black babies are dying at two times the rate of our white babies,” said Shaleeta Smith, community health supervisor at Summit County Public Health, who cited statistics showing more than 12 out of every 1,000 black babies die before their first birthday.

Dr. Tania Lodge, clinical director of the Minority Behavioral Health Group, spoke about the importance of addressing the root causes of infant mortality, pointing to poverty as a key factor.

“Cyclical poverty particularly affects the African-American community, and this leads to chronic maternal stress, which leads to premature birth, which leads to infant mortality,” she said. “It’s imperative that we take a systemic approach (instead of applying) Band-Aids over large wounds.”

Participants later met in small groups to discuss the barriers that prevent women from accessing needed services, including transportation, employment, awareness of resources and personal health.

During one particularly poignant panel session, guests heard from two young mothers who have personally experienced infant loss. The women shared how homelessness and poverty are intricately tied to infant mortality, saying they didn’t find out about the resources available to them until it was too late.

“It took me losing my baby to know about those things,” one woman said. “Now I try to use my experience to help other girls, because there’s just a lack of knowledge.”

In the coming months, the Women’s Endowment Fund will compile the stories and ideas that were shared at the forum into a comprehensive report that will help guide its grant decisions.

The fund plans to award an impact grant of up to $50,000 in March to address the key issues identified during those discussions.

“As a community, we’ve spent a lot of time and money talking about infant mortality and dealing with the challenges of this painful topic,” said Laurie Zucker-man, the forum’s facilitator. “Much is happening, and in spite of that, there’s still a lot left to go. We are here to move the needle even a little bit.”

To stay informed about the outcomes of the forum and get updates on the Women’s Endowment Fund’s future grantmaking, sign up for the fund’s e-news at www.akroncf.org/WEFnews.

Learn more and see photos at www.akroncf.org/Forum2017.
Save the Date

Nov. 15, 2017
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 Nov. 15. A large portion of this year’s funding will focus on programs that reduce the infant mortality rate, including a special impact grant of up to $50,000 to address issues identified during WEF’s recent community forum. Learn more and apply at www.akroncf.org/ WEFimpact.

March 6, 2018
Annual Dinner
The Women’s Endowment Fund is celebrating 25 years of uplifting women and girls! Join us at our annual dinner as we recognize our founding mothers and present the 2018 Judith A. Read Tribute Award. This year’s keynote speaker will be Laura Thompson, executive vice president and CFO of The Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. That evening, we will also recognize the 2018 recipient of the Judith A. Read Tribute Award for her extraordinary commitment to advancing the rights and empowerment of women and girls in Summit County. We will be announcing the recipient very soon, so stay tuned for that exciting news. You won’t want to miss this opportunity to network with other like-minded community members and to 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.

All the best to you and yours,

Sherry Neubert, president
Women’s Endowment Fund

WEF welcomes new board members

The Women’s Endowment Fund recently welcomed two new community leaders to its advisory board. Both women bring a wealth of experience to the board and have already taken on committee leadership roles, with Antha Poleondakis serving as chair of the SHEro Campaign and Kathy Ress co-chairing the 2017 Forum.

See what else is happening in our community and add your own nonprofit event at www.akroncf.org/Around AkronCalendar.
Minister commits $100,000 to WEF with planned gift

Nearly 25 years ago, as the founders of the Women’s Endowment Fund were recruiting their first donors, they met with generous women from all corners of the community. Business executives, grass-roots volunteers and city leaders alike joined forces to support the fund, with more than 100 women ultimately becoming founding donors.

That’s why the Rev. Dr. Sandy Selby — a lifelong advocate of women’s causes and a former colleague of WEF founding mother Marie Covington — chuckled when she recalls she wasn’t on that original list.

“I wasn’t one of the founding donors because they didn’t ask me,” she said with a laugh. “I have known and admired Marie Covington since we worked together at BF Goodrich in the early 1980s, but apparently she didn’t think of asking me.”

In the years following, Sandy says Marie “made up for it — and then some” by nominating her to serve on the board of Akron Community Foundation, where she saw firsthand how the Women’s Endowment Fund was changing the lives of local women and girls.

“Much of my 18-year career at BF Goodrich was in strategic planning roles, and I was very impressed with the vision, focus and stewardship I saw in the Women’s Endowment Fund,” said Sandy, who left the corporate world to enter the field of ministry and now serves as the associate pastor of Furnace Street Mission and as on-call chaplain at Akron Children’s Hospital.

Sandy made her first gift to the Women’s Endowment Fund in 2000 during a challenge grant campaign that catapulted the fund past the $1 million mark. Thirteen years later, when WEF was embarking on its “For Women, Forever” campaign to raise $2.013 million by 2013, then-President Tracy Carter approached Sandy about making another gift.

“As I recall, Tracy told me they were still a little more than $50,000 short of their goal, and I said, ‘OK, then I will give you $50,000,’” Sandy said. “Since I had never been a major contributor to WEF, I think Tracy was stunned. But she had the right message at the right time, and WEF’s track record made me confident in my decision.”

With the help of Sandy’s $50,000 commitment — which included both an immediate cash gift, as well as a planned gift through a future bequest — the Women’s Endowment Fund successfully reached its goal of tripling the endowment in time for its 20th anniversary in 2013.

Nearly five years later, as WEF approaches 25 years of uplifting women and girls in Greater Akron, fund leaders are once again celebrating this significant milestone by encouraging donors like Sandy to renew their commitment to growing the endowment.

For Marie Covington, it was a long-awaited second chance to ask Sandy for her support.

“She invited me to lunch and asked me to make a commitment to continue building WEF’s endowment,” Sandy said. “So, in addition to another cash gift, I decided to also make WEF one of the beneficiaries of my IRA.”

To Marie’s delight, Sandy renewed her commitment to the tune of approximately $100,000, effectively doubling the amount she gave in 2013.

“It was a stretch, but the Women’s Endowment Fund is worth it,” Sandy said. “At a time when national solutions to economic and health and human services issues seem unlikely, local action is imperative. WEF works in our community on the front lines of human need, and it does so with a passionate, informed and targeted approach.”

This year, Sandy will serve on the fund’s Grants Committee, where she’ll have the opportunity to put her gifts to work in the community.

“Both next year and 100 years from now, through my support of WEF I hope to empower women and girls to live fulfilling, productive and healthy lives and to feel safe in their homes, their neighborhoods and the community,” she said. Learn how you, too, can support the Women’s Endowment Fund with your IRA or another type of planned gift at www.myakronlegacy.org.
Akron Community Foundation
Women’s Endowment Fund
345 West Cedar Street
Akron, OH 44307-2407

330-376-8522 (phone)
330-376-0202 (fax)
www.WomensEndowmentFund.org

The Women’s Endowment Fund is an affiliate of Akron Community Foundation, a 501(c)(3) public charity.

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We strive for accuracy in our mailings.
If you find any errors on the address label above, please call 330-376-8522 or send an email to dherman@akroncf.org.

Memorial & Tribute Gifts

March 1 to Sept. 30, 2017

Record-setting gifts celebrate SHEroes
This spring, people from all over Greater Akron honored their SHEroes for Mother’s Day with a gift to the Women’s Endowment Fund. Thanks to the commitment of 30 women ambassadors who promoted the campaign through their personal and professional networks, the campaign raised a record $50,090.02! We’re grateful for your generous gifts, which will uplift women and girls in our community forever.

See a complete list of the mothers, grandmothers, aunts, sisters and friends you honored at www.akroncf.org/SHERoGifts.

Memorial gifts for:
James Anich by
Brad & Bowanne Hansen

Betty Jeanne Bourn by
Nick & Ruthie George

Judith Held by
Jane Carroll
Catherine Hayden
Janet Sandridge

Carolyn Reed Hodge by
Ilene Shapiro

Dorothy Lucien by
Kimberly Haws Falasco

Libby Rosenblatt by
Drs. Mark & Sandy Aubum
Charles & Candace Grisi
Maureen Van Duser

Russell Spetrino by
Jeff & Margaret Lindenberger

Tribute gifts for:
30th Anniversary of Women
in Rotary by
Cherie and Steve Shechter
Charitable Giving Fund

Elizabeth Bartz by
Ilene Shapiro

Roxia Boykin by
Ilene Shapiro

Emily Browning by
Mary Margaret Browning

Frannie Buchholzer by
Patricia Graves

Traci Buckner by

Laurie Zuckerman

Sharlene Chesnes by
Ilene Shapiro

Marie Covington by
Frances Seiberling Buchholzer
Patricia Graves
Louise Kuhns Harvey
Karen Krino
Margaret McDowell Lloyd
Nancy Ellis McClanahan
Dr. Kathy Stafford

Angela Dash by
Laurie Zuckerman

Laura DiCola by
Laurie Zuckerman

Linda Dieffendorff by
Laurie Zuckerman

Bonnie Estep by
Bryan & Susan Kinnamon

Lashawanda Fellows by
Laurie Zuckerman

Christine Freitag by
Patricia Graves

Devi Gursahaney by
Laurie Zuckerman

Micah Mitchell Hines by
Laurie Zuckerman

Greta Johnson by
Betsy Hartschuh

Gizelle Jones by
Laurie Zuckerman

Anne Jorgensen by
Patricia Graves

Jolene Lane by
Laurie Zuckerman

Rhonnie Leder by
Ilene & Robert Shapiro

Teresa LeGrair by
Laurie Zuckerman

Dr. Tania Lodge by
Laurie Zuckerman

Christine Marshall by
Ilene Shapiro

Sherry Neubert by
Mark & Bethany Scheffler

Joy Malek Oldfield by
Laurie Zuckerman

Kendra Philon by
Laurie Zuckerman

Kathy Ress by
Laurie Zuckerman

Renee Scherick by
Laurie Zuckerman

Robert & Ilene Shapiro by
Carol Anderson
Rhonnie Leder

Cathy Shew by
Laurie Zuckerman

Carla Sibley by
Laurie Zuckerman

Sandra Smith by
Patricia Graves

Shaleeta Smith by
Laurie Zuckerman

Chris Williams by
Laurie Zuckerman