New Award Pays Homage to Judy Read

The Women’s Endowment Fund is proud to announce the Judith A. Read Tribute Award for Service & Advocacy for Women in recognition of Judy Read’s tireless commitment to advancing the rights and empowerment of women and girls in Summit County.

The award will be presented annually at the “For Women, Forever” dinner to an individual(s) who best exemplifies the Women’s Endowment Fund’s mission to inspire, empower, educate and strengthen the well-being of women and girls.

The Women’s Endowment Fund board will choose the award recipient based on his or her demonstrated support of the advancement of women and girls in the Summit County area via time, treasure and/or talent, as well as their encouragement and influence of others to support the advancement of women and girls.

Judy Read – the inaugural award recipient at the 2016 annual dinner – has served as a trustee, volunteer and advisor to numerous Northeast Ohio organizations. She is a tireless advocate, passionate volunteer and insightful leader whose support has improved the lives of countless individuals in the Greater Akron area.

Judy’s leadership has been recognized several times over the years, including as a recipient of the Association of Fundraising Professional’s Lifetime Achievement Award and the H. Peter Burg Community Leadership Award from the Red Cross.

Judy served on the board of the Women’s Endowment Fund and in collaboration with her husband, Roger, helped ignite the fund’s early fundraising efforts through a challenge gift. The Reads were also instrumental in the success of the “For Women, Forever” campaign, which raised more than $2 million for the fund.

Please join us in congratulating Judy and thanking her for all she has done to advance women and girls in our community.

WEF announces record grants to women’s programs

In February, the Women’s Endowment Fund awarded $98,500 to 15 nonprofit organizations that improve life for Summit County’s women and girls, marking the fund’s highest grant-making total since its inception in 1993.

Several grants this year supported job readiness programs for women, including a $5,000 grant to Building for Tomorrow for the Reach Opportunity Center at Summit Lake.

The center, which opened in July 2014, helps families in the Summit Lake neighborhood rise above poverty by providing a comprehensive system of education, training, support and resources.

Its multi-generational approach equips mothers to secure employment while simultaneously preparing their young children for kindergarten.

“Programs at the Reach Opportunity Center are designed to strengthen the whole family,” said Jackie McDermott, Grants Committee co-chair. “As a committee, we felt this holistic approach was critical to ensuring the success of both mothers and their children.”

See a complete list of the grants awarded this year at www.akroncf.org/WEFgrants.
Wow, what an exciting time! The Women’s Endowment Fund’s annual “For Women, Forever” dinner was recently held at the Hilton Akron/Fairlawn with a record crowd in attendance to learn how Jeannine and Steve Marks, founders of the Akron Marathon, not only established a world class marathon, but grew the race into an event that generates more than $8 million in economic impact for the Greater Akron community and has raised more than $1 million for local charities. Thank you, Jeannine and Steve, for all that you do for our community.

At the event, we also presented Judy Read with the first annual Judith A. Read Tribute Award in recognition of her extraordinary commitment to advancing the rights and empowerment of women and girls in Summit County. We look forward to honoring her every year when we present the award to others who have followed in her footsteps.

And no mention of the dinner would be complete without a round of applause for our annual dinner co-chairs Debra Shifrin and Gizelle Jones, along with their fabulous committee.

As we begin our transition to warmer weather with spring and summer on their welcome way, it’s a great time to recognize the women who have made a significant impact in our lives. This year, our theme for the annual Mother’s Day campaign is “Who is Your SHEro?” Through the fund, we can help you honor all the SHEroes in your life, while your gift will help women and girls in our community, now and forever.

A safe, nurturing environment where women can grow and develop in a healthy manner is important to the well-being of our entire community. Thank you for your efforts to make a permanent difference in the lives of Summit County women and girls. All the best to you and yours.

Cindy Johnson, president
Women’s Endowment Fund

Charitable IRA Rollover offers tax-smart way to support women & girls

Are you or someone you love age 70½ or older? Good news! In December, the Charitable IRA Rollover provision was made permanent, allowing seniors to support their favorite causes and charities tax-free with distributions from their IRAs. With a charitable rollover, individuals can donate up to $100,000 ($200,000 for couples) from their IRA to the Women’s Endowment Fund without incurring federal income tax on the distribution. The funds must be rolled directly to the Women’s Endowment Fund/Akron Community Foundation to qualify as a rollover. Retirement distributions are some of the most highly taxed forms of income. By making a gift through a charitable rollover, you can avoid paying federal income tax on your required minimum distributions and also decrease your Ohio taxable income, thus reducing your state taxes.

And, unlike a one-time gift to a single charity, your tax-free charitable rollover to the Women’s Endowment Fund will leave a lasting legacy in the community by supporting programs for women and girls forever.

Learn more about this opportunity at www.akroncf.org/IRArollover.
Celebrate the SHEroes in your life with a Mother’s Day gift to WEF

Are there women in your life who have inspired and encouraged you? Perhaps your mother, teacher or friend who has made an unforgettable impact. Then, let her know she’s a SHEro!

This Mother’s Day, honor those special ladies with gifts in their name to the Women’s Endowment Fund. Your gifts will support women and girls in our community forever – a fitting tribute to the women who have made a lasting difference in your own life.

Each woman you honor will receive a SHEro-themed Mother’s Day card telling her of your gift (but not the amount).

Donations ultimately support the Women’s Endowment Fund’s grantmaking, which to date exceeds $850,000 to deserving nonprofit organizations. Give online at www.akroncf.org give/WEFMothersDay.

Tennis pro raises funds for WEF

Women’s Endowment Fund board members Barb Greene and Katie Smucker share a love for the game of tennis and the Women’s Endowment Fund mission to uplift and inspire women and girls. They decided to combine those two passions by hosting “Play it Forward for Women and Girls,” a gathering of more than 60 women tennis players held on February 25.

Mary Joe Fernandez, former professional tennis player and ESPN commentator, was the guest of honor at the event.

Barb and Katie got to spread the word about the positive impact the Women’s Endowment Fund is making on so many lives in Greater Akron, while helping to raise approximately $6,500 for the fund. They shared the importance of being a source of positivity and encouragement to one another on and off the tennis court and how the fund provides support and encouragement to so many women and families in our community who need it.

Mary Joe Fernandez spoke about the women who encouraged her in her career, namely her mother, her sister and the great Billie Jean King. She shared how their support and encouragement helped her to realize her talent and potential.

The Women’s Endowment Fund strives to provide opportunities for all women to realize their potential, and the event inspired those who attended to “Play it Forward” by supporting a worthy cause.
The Women's Endowment Fund is an affiliate of Akron Community Foundation, a 501(c)(3) public charity.

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