

# 25<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

## Inside:

- Co-Chairs Message
- Full Circle
- Grantee Forum
- New Members
- Calendar of Events

On November 5, 2025, nearly 200 Circle members - including 13 of the original founding members, grantees and friends gathered at the Baltimore Museum of Industry to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Baltimore Women's Giving Circle.

The program featured reflections on the Circle's origin from co-founders Pam Corckran and Shelley Goldseker, words of welcome from current co-chairs Barbara Epke and Renee Gordon, and heartfelt words of gratitude for the Circle's support from Sarah Hemminger of Thread and Geri "Coach G" McCarter of Coach G Academy. A spirited performance by the Coach G Academy Step Team followed. The evening concluded with the premiere of The Ripple Effect, a documentary celebrating 25 years of the Circle, featuring inspiring grantees' stories and thoughtful comments from Circle members.

Dawna Cobb and Susan Perl co-chaired the celebration, assisted by Martha Cukor, chair of the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Video Committee. Generous anonymous donations from Circle members and others covered the cost of the event and the production of the video.

In a note to the co-chairs, Shelley Goldseker wrote, "You left no stone unturned in executing a wonderful retrospective by acknowledging the Circle's founding members as well as some of our grantees. The video was terrific and Sarah Hemminger's remarks magnificently underscored the multiple ways the Circle reached out to support her organizational mission of changing the life and outcomes for thousands of Baltimore students, struggling to survive. I know we all share a great sense of pride in the power of pooled philanthropy, and the kindness and generosity of spirit that personifies the BWGC and its members. Thank you for acknowledging the BWGC with such a warmhearted tribute. My heartfelt gratitude to everyone!"

Click [here](#) to view the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary video.



Thank you to our founders who were able to attend.



## Reflections on the BWCG

The BWGC's members and grantees share a mission to support women and families in our community. From their individual perspectives, here are some reflections on the BWGC.

*"The Circle has far exceeded my expectations of 25 years ago in the number of members we have and the number of non-profits we have been able to impact. My wish for the Circle going forward is that we continue to grow."*

**Pam Corckran, Circle Co-Founder**



*"I wanted to join the BWGC because I am passionate about supporting women and children in Baltimore. Being part of a collective felt like a powerful way to create meaningful, lasting change beyond what I could do on my own."*

**Elizabeth Insley, Circle Member**



*"The Goucher Prison Education Partnership has found a constant and invaluable partner in the BWGC. Together we share a commitment to the power of education to not only unlock the power of an individual but to bring generational change to families."*

**Ann W. Duncan, Ph.D. Executive Director, Goucher Prison Education Partnership**



*"We are grateful that the Giving Circle has supported our work to build food security and nourish communities in Baltimore and beyond."*

**Elise Krikau, Chief Philanthropy Officer, Maryland Food Bank**

*"What I love about the Circle is the way it transforms shared values into meaningful impact."*

**Nasika Pace, Circle Member**





## Co-Chairs Message

Greetings to our Circle Members and Friends,

You will read in this Newsletter all about a highlight of the 2025-26 Circle year so far—the celebration of our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. We hope you will enjoy the article, photos, quotes from guests, and share the joy we all felt at celebrating 25 years of the Circle with founders, members, grantees and friends at the Baltimore Museum of Industry in November.

We are thrilled that the Strategic Planning Initiative is moving forward, in collaboration with consultants Patty Prasada Rao of Maryland Nonprofits and Wendy Jacobs of Spark Solutions Consulting, and the guidance of our Strategic Planning Committee and Steering Committee. With input from comprehensive surveys of members and grantees, small group interviews and committee retreats, we anticipate having a plan by the spring. Then the work of planning the implementation will begin. This has been a priority project for some time, and it is wonderful to see it take shape.

The total number of members in the Circle at this writing is 433, with 33 new members joining since July 1. We are grateful that enthusiasm for all that BWGC stands for has spread into the community via our members and grantees. Almost all new members came to us after learning about the Circle from friends who are BWGC members. Please know that everyone is welcome to be a guest or bring a guest to most of our events, just contact Membership at [membership@thebwgc.com](mailto:membership@thebwgc.com).

Our BWGC identity is so much about our Grants initiative! Every year we hear about the work of grantees, new as well as established. At the close of the application period in December, applications, once again, were very high—178. This number reflects the growing needs of women and their families.

Response to our Full Circle events this year has been very positive. The Education Committee focused the programs on the greatest needs of women in Baltimore. The first two presenters addressed workforce development and women's legal issues in Maryland. In March, attention will turn to housing issues faced by women and their families.

We urge you to check out our website as there are calendar events, previous newsletters, and our Year In Review all there for you to take a look at. We continue to do our best to keep you informed, and we urge you to be in touch with us! Thanks to all of you for your interest in nonprofits and Baltimore.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Renee &amp; Barbara".

Renee Gordon and Barbara Epke

## Full Circle Meetings Focus on Empowering Women

In her address to the September Full Circle, Katie Curran O'Malley, CEO of the Women's Law Center of Maryland, said, "We don't need to protect women... Women need to be empowered. Women need to be in the room." At the December Full Circle, Dr. Sandra Kurtinitis, President of the Baltimore County Community College (CCBC), echoed that theme: when we give women the appropriate tools and opportunities, they can thrive.

More than 100 members gathered at each of the last two Full Circle meetings to hear from these outstanding leaders. From their respective positions, Curran O'Malley and Kurtinitis talked about the struggles that women face: domestic violence, challenges to bodily autonomy, affordable legal representation, limited opportunities for meaningful careers, gender-based wage disparities, and more. All this in the context of federal policies that bring increased risks to women's physical, economic, and personal development, and reduce their chances of success.

Women in Maryland are fortunate to have powerful institutions like the Women's Law Center of Maryland and CCBC. One provides legal representation to ensure the physical safety, economic security, and autonomy of women throughout the state. The other lifts barriers and adapts its educational and institutional policies so that women can achieve fulfilling careers that support and enrich their families and communities.

Through our funding, the Circle has supported the Women's Law Center of Maryland. At CCBC, the women the Circle supports can get education and training that will prepare them to succeed. As Dr. Kurtinitis said, "We care about the same things; we are joined at the hip."



## Grantee Connect Forum: Grantees and Funders Address Challenges Together

The November Grantee Connect Forum, Achieving Success Together: Strategic Conversations About How Baltimore's Nonprofits and Funders Might Move Forward, convened around 40 of BWGC's nonprofit partners and nine representatives from funding organizations to discuss current challenges, their changing strategies, and the new collaboration models that may be required.

Grantees rotated between funders, using discussion prompts to facilitate open exchanges on topics such as the biggest hurdles that grantees and funders face, and what changes are needed to achieve success together. They posted their responses to these questions on a wall, noting their names and organizations, so others could make connections and find common ground. They also posted ways to move forward: "Outreach to nonprofits with compatible goals to seek shared funding." "Lean deeply into meaningful relationships to facilitate partnerships and mutual aid." "Prioritize what to support because the needs are so great."

The participants' engagement with these topics was palpable. They commented on the value of getting insights from peers, and the benefits of grantee-grant maker dialogue. As one grantee commented, "There isn't a single person I shouldn't meet with after this, if we're going to move forward."

The energy in the room, the lingering conversations, the exchanges of contact information and follow-up commitments (facilitated by a much-appreciated print directory of all attendees) were clear indicators that – regardless of their respective role in the philanthropic world – this session met a critical need.



## Education Committee Programs Highlight Food Insecurity

As Circle members, and as individuals, we want to make informed philanthropic decisions. To that end, the Education Committee coordinates learning programs about the issues affecting women and children in our area and the organizations that are meeting those challenges head on.

One such issue is growing food insecurity. Another is the lack of access families have to basic personal care items. Both have been exacerbated by recent federal cuts to funding and jobs. These issues made our programs with the Maryland Food Bank (MFB) and the Student Support Network of Baltimore County (SSN) especially timely and insightful.

In a presentation by Elise Krikau, Chief Philanthropy Officer, Maryland Food Bank, participants learned how MFB is adapting to meet Marylanders' needs. As Ms. Krikau described it, the day-to-day situation is "dynamic." This year they distributed 43.5 million meals, ran job skills development programs, and even helped families pay for common household expenses.

Being nimble is also required from SSN, which Circle members visited in November. SSN has set up "rooms of support" in 21 Baltimore County schools, stocked with free food, school supplies, clothing, and personal care products for any child who needs them. As importantly, SSN strives to provide items that are culturally appropriate and in styles that all students appreciate.

Both organizations welcome volunteers, so find out how you can contribute to their exceptional work.



### Circle Works Food Drive

Thanks to our very generous Circle members, Circle Works collected more than 80 bags of non-perishable food, half of which were donated to Heaven on Earth NOW and the other half to the Jeremiah Project.



## New Members

Welcome new members! The increase in BWGC membership reflects a shared desire to make a meaningful difference in our community.

Jane Anderson  
Martha Armenti  
Vivian Banks  
Mimi Blitzer  
Christine Bricker  
Mary Love Connor  
Debbie Davis  
Mary Anne Facciolo  
Jackie Fried

Ellen Gabriel  
Carol Graves  
Jennifer Haire  
Emily Hamsher Kindred  
Kelly Hodge-Williams  
Sheryl Jacobs  
Martha Johnston  
Lindsay Koskinen

Eleanor Landauer  
Leslie Leitch  
Ruth Leys  
Christine Miller  
Brenda Moses-Allen  
Jess Myers  
Mary Nickerson  
Margaret Pharris

Hope Ratner  
Pamela Russell  
Ellen Shiery  
Jennifer St. Germain  
Susan Sullam  
Kristine Townsend  
Vicki Vaughn  
Marybeth Young



## Upcoming Events

**2/11**

Circle  
Reads

**3/18**

Full Circle  
Meeting

**5/13**

Annual  
Meeting