



Connecting Women
Improving Lives

THE CIRCLE

A FUND OF THE BALTIMORE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION | FALL 2015

FOCUS ON RACHEL FORWARD AND SABINE OISHI

Rachel and Sabine, members from two different generations, are both enthusiastic about the Circle. Below are excerpts from a conversation the women had about their Circle experience. To read the full conversation, please visit www.thebwgc.org

How did you hear about the BWGC?

Sabine: Some of my best friends were members, some from early on in the Circle. It made so much more sense to give to the BWGC where there was no overhead, the money was spent in my own community and I could participate in who got it and be assured all the funds were spent.

Rachel: About a year after we moved to Baltimore, a friend from my children's school told me about the BWGC.

Why did you decide to join?

Sabine: Mental health is my profession. I thought I knew about this population having worked in Baltimore for several decades and in many places. But I discovered that I knew nothing at all.

Rachel: I joined to learn about nonprofits in Baltimore. Also, while volunteering for an organization is helpful, nonprofits also need money, and I liked the way the BWGC

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NEW ENERGY AT BALTIMORE'S HEALTH DEPARTMENT

The speaker for this year's first Full Circle meeting was Dr. Leana Wen, the new and dynamic young Baltimore City Health Commissioner. Dr. Wen is a Harvard educated emergency physician and community advocate. She heads the oldest public health system in the United States with 1,100 employees.

Dr. Wen spoke with humor and openness about issues she obviously cares passionately about, specifically how to make inroads into the complex and insidious health and social issues within the city. A compelling statistic was the fact that life expectancy among residents of Sandtown-Winchester is on average twenty years lower than that in more affluent Baltimore neighborhoods.

Dr. Wen understands public health as a tool that can and should be used to promote social justice. Improving public health calls for a holistic approach that for her incorporates three basic concepts:

First of all, it requires listening to the community and bringing needed services to meet people where they are. In that spirit, the health department responded to the recent unrest by establishing 24/7 call lines for triaging urgent appointments, as well as getting medications, and even food, delivered in areas where people had lost access to pharmacies or grocery stores.

As important, is to make sure that any



Laurie Kelly, Dr. Leana Wen, Sue Talbott.

intervention or prevention services start as early as possible in a child's life. Many of the issues with a focus on youth health and wellness are addressed by a coalition of over a hundred city agencies and private organizations, overseen by the health department. Importantly, there are more healthcare professionals in city schools and Dr. Wen also stressed the huge importance of mental health services that have too long been given parity with other health services on paper only.

And lastly, Dr. Wen sees an urgent need for "changing the conversation" about public health issues, particularly the stigmatization of addiction and mental illness. Sadly, there are still a lot of misconceptions and limited understanding of these diseases and either a lack of empathy or outright hostility towards its victims. Here she sees another important role for the BWGC, whose members she invited to educate and engage friends and neighbors in a conversation about vital issues that affect all of us one way or another. ■

CHAIR TALK



Penny Wald and Peggy Schapiro Co-Chairs of the Baltimore Women's Giving Circle

Since the BWGC founding 15 years ago, our members have supported women in our community as they work to improve their lives and the lives of their family members. The civic unrest that broke out in April has forced us to realize that despite the best efforts of many community members, agencies, and philanthropic organizations like ours, there are still many impoverished neighborhoods in Baltimore where women and children face tough challenges.

As co-chairs, we salute the commitment of our Circle members to deepen their understanding of the complex issues facing Baltimore and to seek ways to meaningfully respond. Our education committee has planned multiple programs for this year that explore systemic problems and challenge us to think about them in new ways.

Dr. Leana Wen, the Baltimore City Health Commissioner, addressed some of these at our **first Full Circle meeting**.

At the **December Full Circle meeting**, Kevin Shird and Fagan Harris, two young Baltimore community organizers, will share how they are working to make a better Baltimore.

In addition, the **Circle Forum** offers a tour of Sandtown-Winchester to visit two grantees working in Freddie Gray's neighborhood.

Circle Reads presents the provocative book, *Not in My Neighborhood: How Bigotry Shaped a Great American City*, by Baltimore Sun reporter Antero Pietila.

Circle Advocacy prepares us, as individuals, to advocate for legislation addressing the needs of vulnerable women and families.

The Circle is also finding more ways to support our grantees. Our **Facebook page** offers a platform for grantees to communicate their needs and news to us. **Grantee Connect** serves as a forum for grantee alums to learn together and **Circle Works** organizes volunteer opportunities to help grantees. Many of our members have reached out to develop their own relationships with grantees, serving on boards, writing grants, developing strategic plans, and raising needed funds.

In this critical time in Baltimore, we are proud of the work we do, yet remain cognizant of all that remains to be done. We applaud you, our dedicated members, as you find new ways to stay involved and work to build a stronger city in which everyone can thrive. ■

A RENEWED EMPHASIS ON ADVOCACY

The Visioning Committee, the “think tank” of the Circle, spent last year exploring the broad scope of advocacy and understanding those aspects that are consistent with and an integral part of the mission of BWGC. Committee members interviewed other Circles engaged in advocacy, held two focus groups of Circle members, attended an Association of Baltimore Area Grantmakers program on advocacy for nonprofits, and hosted Kevin Moreno Griffin of the Baltimore Community Foundation to learn about partnering opportunities. The committee concluded that many of BWGC's activities constitute advocacy, that we should expand those activities, but also be clear that BWGC does not lobby. The committee recommended an increased focus on educating members about the legislative process in Maryland, Baltimore City and County to enable Circle members to better advocate for the needs of our current and potential grantees and to individually serve as advocates in support of issues of importance to them. Our expanded mission statement now includes the word advocacy.

*Through collective giving and collaboration, the Baltimore Women's Giving Circle at the Baltimore Community Foundation seeks to empower women and their families in the greater Baltimore area to achieve self-sufficiency. The Giving Circle encourages members to participate in philanthropy through grant-making, education, **advocacy** and community-based activities.*

Sue Talbott, Co-Chair of the Education Committee, has organized the first Circle Advocacy meeting to be held on November 16th. A representative from The League of Women Voters will discuss the legislative process and the importance of citizen advocacy, and Delegate Geraldine Valentino, an attorney and nurse, who is Co-Chair of the Joint Committee on Children, Youth, and Families in the Maryland Legislature will talk about upcoming legislation that relates to women and their families, and describe the power of advocacy when individuals act as advocates for causes they care about.

A trip to Annapolis to meet elected officials and to learn to be effective advocates is proposed for early 2016. ■

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pooled together money from many donors to make an impact.

What have you gotten out of/ hope to get out of the Circle?

Sabine: Living in Baltimore for fifty years, I have expanded my social circle tenfold over the past five years, compared to the first forty-five. It has just been a wonderfully gratifying and enriching experience.

Rachel: In addition, I have learned a lot about communications, technology, and social media through my work on the Communications Committee. Of all my work, the work on Facebook has been the most rewarding. Some of our posts now receive more than 500 views, and our press release announcing the new grantees had over 1,500 views this last spring. ■

THE TREASURER REPORTS

THE STATE OF THE CIRCLE

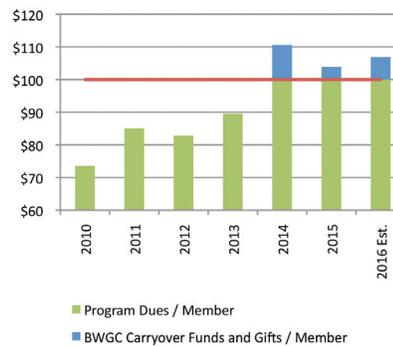
In May 2015, our 14th year as a Circle, 427 members issued over \$441,000 in grants, including our first 2-year grants. Since our inception, we have contributed almost \$4 million in grants to more than 150 organizations.

The \$1,100 annual BWGC membership dues are deposited in two accounts – the *Grants Account* where \$1,000 per member is deposited for the sole use of making grants, and the *Programs Account* where \$100 per member pays for all Circle program expenses, including those associated with our committees and the Baltimore Community Foundation's (BCF) administrative support.

Our goal as a Circle is to operate with a balanced budget, which means the dues collected in one year cover all the expenses for that year. This formula works easily with the *Grants Account*; the funds in the *Grants Account* dictate the number of grants we award.

Over the past 14 years as our membership has grown, our program expenses and BCF fees have increased considerably. Our annual dues revenue (\$100/member) no longer covers our

Total Program Expenses per Member

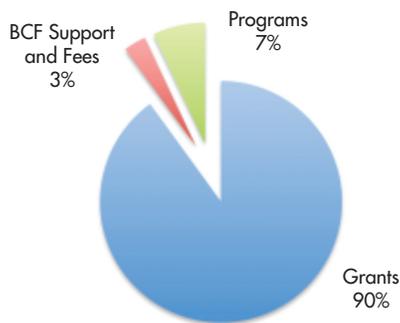


annual program expenses. For the past several years we have used our savings, called “carryover”, to cover any deficits incurred due to program expenses and special projects. Although our financial status is strong and our “carryover” is generous (currently \$70,000), a balanced budget makes financial sense for a healthy organization.

Last spring, the Steering Committee appointed an ad hoc committee on financial planning to study this issue. The committee made several recommendations regarding the budget process designed to contain expenses while maintaining the excellent programming of the Circle. The committee will continue to meet through the fall to assess our dues with respect to membership and program growth that we hope to continue to enjoy in the future.

For questions please contact treasurer@thebwgc.org. ■

Member Dues Analysis



CIRCLE READS!

Not in My Neighborhood: How Bigotry Shaped a Great American City
by Antero Pietila

November 19th

Visit www.thebwgc.org for more information

MAKING A DIFFERENCE:

SECOND CHANCE FOR WOMEN

For 30 years, Mary Joel Davis dedicated her life's work to helping incarcerated persons. As founder of Alternative Directions, she was frustrated by the lack of services for incarcerated women and by the women's own lack of hope. After her "retirement", Mary used those three decades of experience to found Second Chance for Women.

Begun in 2008, Second Chance for Women is carefully tailored to work with women serving long-term or life sentences with the possibility of parole between the ages of 35 – 60 during their rehabilitation and parole.

With an army of volunteers, Mary and two staff provide a variety of services including case management, advocacy, referral, legal assistance, one-on-one support and peer groups. In addition to negotiating the legal process of parole, Second Chance for Women works with their clients to develop a more positive self-image and create a plan for post-release. Today, the program is serving 50 women, nearly double that of just one year ago.

BWGC provided \$20,000 to Second Chance for Women in 2014. With these funds, Mary and her team developed a monthly parole workshop facilitated by a student from the University of Maryland's Gender Violence Clinic to help more than 17 women compile their parole packet and prepare more generally for parole. In partnership with the House of Ruth, 11 women received ongoing domestic violence support, and pro-bono attorneys assisted more than 21 women prepare for parole hearings. Additionally, the grant enabled Second Chance for Women to create a robust database and improved documentation on clients' status thus improving advocacy for parole.

The results matter! Three women have been granted parole and pro-bono attorneys are working with seven women on their post-convictions actions.

Second Chance for Women is a wonderful example of how one woman's call to action can have a life-changing impact on others, not to mention setting the example of re-defining retirement. ■



**BALTIMORE
WOMEN'S
GIVING
CIRCLE**

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FALL 2015

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IN HER OWN WORDS

What are Your Plans and Goals for the Year?



LISSA ABRAMS

Post Grants

I hope to engage Circle members in learning the work of BWGC grantees to assure funds are spent as intended. I also hope to educate Circle members about the needs of grantees and to promote networking and other means of support in order to assure optimal outcomes for grantees.



ANN DANIELS

Communications

Working with Communications is exciting as it allows me to get involved with, and think about, the Circle in a completely new way. I look forward helping inform our audiences internally and externally about the Circle, the amazing opportunities that come with membership and the incredible work of our grantees.



LISA FIELD

Membership

My goal is to continue the good work of our Membership Committee in welcoming larger numbers of prospective members. Twenty-six new members have joined in 2015 as of early August. I look forward to helping our sub-committee co-chairs develop the Mentoring Program as well as the Charities and Speakers Sub-Committee.



ANITA POMERANTZ

Grants

My main goal is to support the transition of our grant application and evaluation processes to our new online system. Change is always challenging, but my hope is to help smooth the path not only for the grant applicants, but also for our dedicated team leaders and hard-working grant readers.