

Women Helping Women

Celebrating 20 Years of Impact for the Baltimore Women's Giving Circle



MARTHA CUKOR
BWGC CO-CHAIR



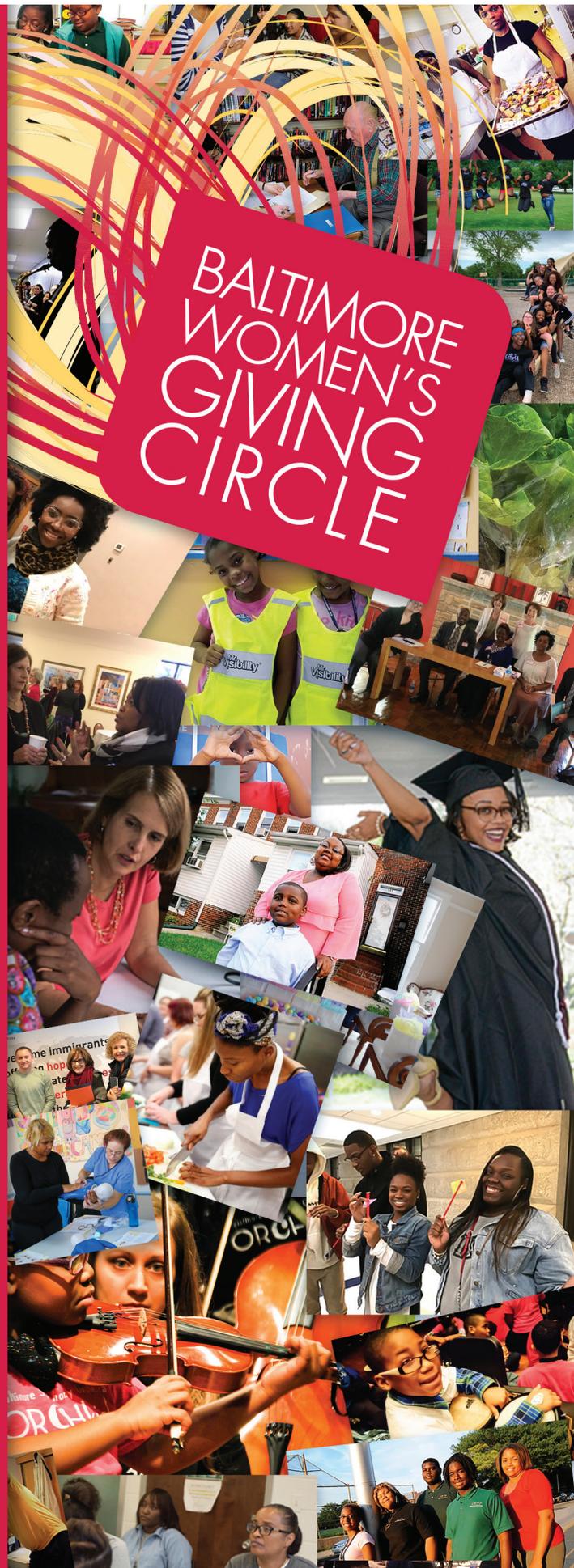
SUSAN PERL
BWGC CO-CHAIR

The Baltimore Women's Giving Circle (BWGC) is celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2021 with an inspiring legacy of granting \$7 million to roughly 180 organizations that promote self-sufficiency for women and their families in Baltimore. Founded by Shelley Goldseker and Pam Corckran, along with 50 other women, the Circle has since expanded to include more than 450 members!

"Women join the Baltimore Women's Giving Circle because they want to meet dedicated women and learn about Baltimore," said Martha Cukor, BWGC co-chair. "They are in the Circle because they want to see their money bundled to make a difference." Adds Susan Perl, BWGC co-chair, "It goes directly to our community and it's woman-to-woman which strengthens it for me. You can see the direct impact on women."

Just like the other hundreds of current members, Martha and Susan, now in their second year as co-chairs, share in the belief that they can make a greater impact collectively than individually. The Circle is also proud to be a group always seeking more ways to support and get to know their community. In addition to giving funds, the women of the Circle spend time building relationships with the organizations and the people involved. "It's great because we get to see that personal touch," shared Susan. "We get a chance to meet the actual people who we are serving." Many Circle members are so moved by the tremendous work of local organizations that they find themselves writing personal checks, signing up to volunteer, or joining boards. With diverse backgrounds and talents, these compassionate women offer their unique expertise to organizations that may, for example, need support in preparing a budget or finding volunteers for a workforce development program.

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With years of memories to sift through, Martha and Susan both found it difficult to identify just one favorite story of a relationship with a grantee that made a lasting impact on them. Yet Martha remembered feeling especially moved by a visit to a small halfway house in South Baltimore. “We went for a site visit and the executive director had dedicated her entire life to serving women she might never see again,” shared Martha. “I left there so in awe of what our grantees do for others and so humbled.” As a former nurse by profession, Susan loves to support the Caroline Center which has trained women in the city for careers as certified nursing assistants and pharmacy technicians for more than 25 years. Another favorite grantee for both is Black Women Build, which teaches women carpentry, electrical, and plumbing skills as they rehab dilapidated homes in West Baltimore. Following the program, women have the chance to purchase the homes that they helped to restore.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected BWGC’s operations, with committee meetings and grant and post-grant processes now conducted virtually. Despite the physical distance, membership increased in 2020 and the group found exciting opportunities to support resilient organizations meeting new and pressing needs brought on by the crisis. The women of the Circle were especially impressed with efforts to distribute necessary technology, such as computers, WiFi access, and hotspots, to ensure Baltimore women remained on the path to self-sufficiency.

Both Martha and Susan have great hope for what’s in store for the Baltimore Women’s Giving Circle. “We’re in a very strong position, even though it’s been a heck of a year for everybody,” said Susan. “The mission of the Circle is to serve women and children in the Baltimore area,” shared Martha. “That’s what our mission will continue to be long after us. We’re consistent—and we have been for 20 years.” ■