



# The Women's Foundation of Southern Arizona

*Fostering equity and opportunity for women and girls.*



SPRING 2011

## WFSA CELEBRATES 20 Years

Twenty years ago, Harriet Silverman and Melody Robidoux envisioned a world where women are healthy, successful and thriving. From that vision, the Women's Foundation of Southern Arizona was born.

To celebrate our emerald anniversary, the Women's Foundation is honoring Melody and Harriet at our 18th annual celebration of women, philanthropy and social change grant-making Wednesday, April 6, from 11 am to 1:30 pm at the Tucson Convention Center, 260 S. Church Avenue.

The day's events will include the announcement of our 2011 grantees, a "Grantee Expo" highlighting the accomplishments of our 2010 grant recipients, and remembering our inaugural grant recipients from 1993.

Reservations are available by calling Kesha Dawson at 622-8886. Tickets are \$60 per person, or \$600 per table of 10.



Harriet Silverman is a native of Baltimore, Maryland, who moved to Tucson in 1984. She soon found her way to an association with Women's Studies Advisory Council and Expanding Horizons to establish a mentoring program for high school girls to partner with women who used science and math in their work lives.

In 1991 The Community Foundation sponsored a workshop for non-profits and through this connection the partnership of Harriet and Melody Robidoux was forged. Both were shocked that statistics revealed that 5% only of philanthropic dollars went to projects for women and girls. Exposure to the Women's Funding Network, a national alliance of women's groups, provided the inspiration for the establishment of WFSA. Focus group meetings with local leaders of women's non-profits gave insight into Southern Arizona's needs. Harriet became the first executive director and Melody provided extraordinary technical support.

"We were able to fill a niche. Our interest in grassroots groups gave us the flexibility to address social change as our original goal."

On the 20th anniversary of WFSA's founding, she says, "The obligations of women are even more intense now in this economy. We still have a long way to go. We are grateful for the continuing support of the Community Foundation and the philanthropic spirit of the people of Southern Arizona."



Two decades after its founding, the Women's Foundation of Southern Arizona "has morphed into something larger than we ever anticipated, an incredible women's foundation," says co-founder Melody Robidoux.

While the Foundation's focus has changed from the hope of providing scholarships to grant-making and conducting research on issues that affect women and girls locally, Robidoux says she's proud that "other women -- and men -- took up the cause of the foundation and have kept up the work."

Although Robidoux left her beloved Tucson five years after the organization's beginnings, she continues to support the WFSA through gifts from her own foundation, based in Tucson, and is thrilled that the Women's Foundation has surpassed a \$1 million endowment by its 20th anniversary.

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Melody Robidoux  
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The mission of the Women's F

# Finding Hope & inspiration



## Dear Friend of WFSA,

Like the rest of our community, I've been struggling to make sense of the unfathomable acts of violence on January 8, 2011. In the midst of grief, what gives us the hope and strength to persevere?

And, like so many other people, I keep coming back to nine-year-old Christina-Taylor Green.

It's been reported that Christina-Taylor hoped to be the first woman to play Major League Baseball. As you might imagine, this resonated with us at the Women's Foundation of Southern Arizona. After all, our vision is a *world where women and girls are able to achieve their full potential and pursue their dreams*.

Christina-Taylor Green's ambition was bold; some would say audacious. It was unfettered by what happened in the past, and inspired by the unlimited possibilities available to women and girls in our country. As the only girl on her team, she refused to accept that only boys could excel at baseball.

As we prepare to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Women's Foundation, I couldn't help but think of all the women who refused to be limited by their gender, and the "firsts" they accomplished in the past 20 years.

**Eileen Collins** – spacecraft pilot, 1995

**Madeleine Albright** – Secretary of State, 1997

**Marsha Cohen** – CFO at a "big four" accounting firm, 1997

**Arizona's "fab five,"** 1998

**Toni Massaro** – Dean, James E. Rogers College of Law, 1999

**Katie Couric** – solo female anchor on a "big three" network, 2006

**Nancy Pelosi** – Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, 2009

**Marcia McNutt** – Director of the U.S. Geological Survey, 2009

**Elinor Ostrom** – Nobel Prize in economics, 2009

Sadly, this list will never include Christina-Taylor as the first woman to play Major League Baseball. But across the country there are tens of thousands of girls who will be inspired by her dream, and who will refuse to believe there is anything they can't do because of their gender.

It is that hope – of girls growing up to be strong, confident women who pursue their dreams – that inspires the work of the Women's Foundation every day.

In his Tucson speech, President Obama evoked the image of Christina-Taylor jumping in rain puddles in heaven.

Me? I have a different heavenly image. I see Christina-Taylor wearing a Dodgers uniform, defending second base.

Peace,

**Laura Penny**, Executive Director, WFSA

# MISSION

Foundation of Southern Arizona is to foster equity and opportunity for women and girls.

## HANDS OF A FRIEND and Poverty to Payroll

By Patti O'Berry

Hands of a Friend is a domestic violence foundation in Green Valley, Arizona, operating Genesis House, a transitional domestic violence shelter. A resident may reside in shelter two years with an additional six months with board approval.

Many residents at the shelter are either under-educated, lacking employable skills or both. This does NOT mean that domestic violence victims in general are under-educated or lacking employability. Traditionally, women who seek long-term shelter do so because they have no other avenue available to them.

Many victims were not allowed to work and didn't participate in financial contributions or decisions in the relationships they fled. Many of these women have no extended family to lend comfort, emotional support or be a source of empowerment. The history of abuse has often been generational from their childhood to their own adult relationships.

Many returning to abusive relationships do so because they cannot financially survive alone. In today's economy, it often takes two incomes to support one household. A woman fleeing abuse with three children and without a high school education, can find it virtually impossible to meet financial obligations to

support a family of four. Because it is difficult, if not impossible, many women may return to the abuser, or will be forced into a life of government aid and poverty.

In search of economic justice for women fleeing abuse, Hands of a Friend empowers this population to become entrepreneurs of their financial futures.

Residents of the shelter are offered opportunities at all levels of continued education. For some, that may begin with learning English as a second language, completing their GED and/or vocational courses.

Thanks to the support and funding from the Women's Foundation of Southern Arizona, Hands of a Friend, in partnership with the business community has been able to expand education opportunities and enhance employability with our program "Poverty to Payroll." Twenty-four community businesses and/or professionals lend their knowledge and provide mentorship and internships that give shelter residents employment and entrepreneurship opportunities that lead to their greatest earning capacity as heads of households. Classes held in the last six months have already produced positive



results, as currently all women in shelter are either enrolled in continuing education, employed, serving internships or volunteering to enhance their skills. Two residents have combined their skills and talents and are in the beginning phase of opening their own business with the potential to offer employment to other residents.

As the program is in its infancy, Hands of a Friend is looking forward to rewarding results for future residents' financial independence and entrepreneurship in the business world. More information about Hands of a Friend and Poverty to Payroll at [www.domesticviolencehelp.us](http://www.domesticviolencehelp.us). \*

## IRA Charitable Giving Extended through 2011

An individual who is at least age 70½ has the ability to make transfers directly from her IRA account to a public charity in 2011. Such qualified charitable distributions are limited to \$100,000 per year, per donor, and are not included in the donor's income as a normal IRA distribution would be. A donor may use a qualified charitable distribution to fulfill her Minimum Distribution Requirement (MRD).

Consider making a gift from your IRA account to the Women's Foundation of Southern Arizona in 2011. The Women's Foundation can guide you through the distribution process to ensure the maximum tax benefit to you. For more information, contact Laura Penny at 520-622-8886 or [Lpenny@womensgiving.org](mailto:Lpenny@womensgiving.org). \*





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Envisioning a world where women and girls are able to achieve their full potential and pursue their dreams.

## Thanks to Our Donors!

The Women's Foundation acknowledges these tribute and memorial gifts received between October 22, 2010 and February 28, 2011:

### GIFTS IN MEMORY OF...

**Helen & Howard Briggs**

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**Sheriff Clarence Dupnick**

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