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Community Philanthropy Celebrated at Oct. 27 Event

Teaching the importance of philanthropy to the next generation is more critical now than ever, community leader Emily Burton Smith told members and guests at the Women's Fund El Dorado (WFED) Membership Celebration Dinner on Oct. 27.

The festive event filled the Forni Building at the El Dorado County Fairgrounds with nearly 300 women and men who were there to celebrate the power of collective giving, the cornerstone of WFED. The organization collects, combines and leverages member donations in the form of several substantial grants each year—totaling \$415,000 since WFED was founded in 2007. Grant recipients are voted on by the membership and must be qualified local nonprofits that enhance the quality of life on the western slope.

In addition to sharing good food, friendship and inspiration with likeminded individuals, attendees sat at tables set in many imaginative themes by the WFED members who volunteered to decorate for the event, one of three held by WFED each year.

Cathy Bean, WFED Cabinet chair for 2015-2016, opened the evening by thanking members for their “purposeful and meaningful commitment” to the cause of collective giving over the past nine years and noting the organization will celebrate a decade of service in 2017. She introduced the keynote speaker, “a guiding force in this community,” with whom she first became acquainted when both served on the El Dorado Arts Council. Smith, she said, helped impress upon her value of working together for the common good and inspired her with “the triad of work, family and community involvement” that balances and guides Smith's life.

The joy of volunteering comes not only from helping others but also from “modeling philanthropy for the next generation—the kids *are* watching,” Smith went on to tell the audience. “Teaching children to be change agents is perhaps even more crucial today, in modern times, when we live in relative isolation. Helping others is no longer essential to

humans' survival as a species—now it's a choice, and I implore you to make that choice. I can think of no better legacy for us to leave behind," she concluded.

Smith holds a doctorate in pharmacy from UC San Francisco, where she created her own residency program in pharmacoeconomics and health outcomes research, the first of its kind in California, which led to a career with major pharmaceutical companies. She relocated to El Dorado County from the Bay Area 12 years ago and has been a member of WFED since attending her first Membership Celebration in 2008. She was impressed by the "collective energy, passion and joy in helping others" she witnessed at the event, as well as the fact that "you don't have to live here for decades to be welcomed into the Women's Fund."

As the evening drew to a close, Robyn Parker, former vice chair and incoming chair of WFED, encouraged members to look ahead to the 10-year celebration in coming months and to attend the next public event, the Community Needs Forum on Jan. 19, to learn more about the need for philanthropy in El Dorado County. "Together," she concluded, "we inspire...and empower women to embrace philanthropy. Together, we are Women's Fund El Dorado."

A fund of the El Dorado Community Foundation, WFED is open to all for a donation of \$200 a year or more. For more information, visit womensfundeldorado.org.

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Photos — by Shelly Thorene:

WFED_1.jpg — Keynote speaker Emily Burton Smith

WFED_2.jpg — The speaker inspired the audience with her message

WFED_3.jpg — Nearly 300 members and guests attended the event