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Over \$70,000 Awarded at Women's Fund Gala

A record \$70,500 was awarded to five nonprofits on the county's western slope at the annual Women's Fund El Dorado (WFED) Grants Gala the evening of May 4. The event took place at the El Dorado County Fairgrounds and was attended by an estimated 250.

The program began with WFED Chair Robyn Parker's introduction of Supervisor Brian Veerkamp, with a proclamation passed by the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors in April commending the organization for a decade of service to the community. Founding WFED member Kathleen "Katy" Peek was recognized for her instrumental role in the El Dorado Community Foundation, WFED's fiscal agent, since 1990 and for "planting the seed" for the Women's Fund in 2007. Since then, WFED's membership has grown to over 440 and the organization has awarded \$480,000 to over 50 nonprofit programs.

Recipients of WFED's two 2017 Community Focus Grants, totaling \$52,500, include Big Brothers Big Sisters of El Dorado County for "Tomorrow's Path Together," a program to reach youth detained in Juvenile Hall with trained adult mentors to serve as positive role models. It received a grant of \$27,500 to fund its efforts.

A second Community Focus Grant, for \$25,000, went to the Assistance League of Sierra Foothills' "Operation School Bell," which works with local schools to identify socioeconomically disadvantaged students in grade K-8 and gives them vouchers to purchase new school-appropriate clothing.

Three Impact Grants totaling \$18,000 were also awarded for 2017. The Acorn Grant, for first-time recipients, went to Marshall Foundation for Community Health's Cancer Patient

Transportation Program to provide rides to local cancer patients who lack their own vehicles or are too elderly or ill to drive themselves to treatment. The 2017 Human Services Grant recipient was CASA El Dorado, to fund special training for more volunteers to advocate for and mentor abused and neglected children. A Community Benefit Grant was awarded to the Placerville Downtown Association to continue the Flower Baskets on Main Street community beautification project.

In addition, 2017 Wickline Scholarships were awarded to Tara Baird, Danielle Whittemore and Janine Wilson. The scholarship, established by a legacy gift of the late Marian Wickline, is awarded to local women ages 25 and older who are overcoming personal hardships by pursuing post-secondary education.

Prior to formally announcing the 2017 recipients, WFED Grants Committee Chair Kathy Witherow introduced three of the previous year's recipients, who inspired attendees with updates. So far, Boys & Girls Club El Dorado's SMART Girls Program, funded by a 2016 Community Focus Grant, has helped 50 girls become empowered "to take good care of themselves," said CEO Sean McCartney. A moving video featured the words of some of the children themselves, with one summing it up: "Thank you for being there for me when no one else was." McCartney was joined onstage by some of the enthusiastic beneficiaries of the club's after-school programs.

Other 2016 recipients were the Only Kindness Community Resource Center, whose Street Outreach Mobile Office Project (SOMO), on view in the fairgrounds parking lot, takes services to the homeless, "the most vulnerable in the community," and 3 Strands Global, whose Human Trafficking Prevention Education program was able to reach hundreds of local students. "An educated student is a protected student," in the words of Ashlie Bryant, co-founder and president.

"Like the heritage oak trees of El Dorado County, the seed for WFED was planted in 2007 and the organization began to grow," concluded WFED Chair Parker. "A root structure was established and over the past decade the organization has steadily flourished and become stronger and more vibrant," thanks to the generous support of the community.

"In our 10 years, we have grown to become the second-largest granting organization in El Dorado County," she pointed out. The 10-year anniversary will culminate in WFED's annual Membership Celebration, set for Oct. 5 and open to the public.

Women's Fund El Dorado, a fund of the El Dorado Community Foundation, is a collective giving organization that is open to all for a donation of \$200 a year or more. Funds

collected are pooled and leveraged in the form of the grants, which support community philanthropy to enhance the quality of life on the western slope of El Dorado County. For details, visit womensfundeldorado.org.

PHOTOS by Shelly Thorene:

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Wickline Scholars for 2017 were recognized at the WFED Grants Gala. From left: Coleen Johnson, WFED Education Committee co-chair; Wickline Scholars Danielle Whittemore and Tara Baird; and Amy Andersen, Education Committee co-chair (not pictured: scholarship recipient Janine Wilson).

WFED_photo_2.jpg

Brenda Frachiseur, executive director, and Valerie Piotrowski, development manager, of Big Brothers Big Sisters of El Dorado County accepted a 2017 Community Focus Grant for that nonprofit's "Tomorrow's Path Together" program to reach youth detained in Juvenile Hall.

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Left to right: Joanne MacDonald, Harriet Knops and Sue Nelson represented the Assistance League of Sierra Foothills in receiving a 2017 Community Focus Grant for its "Operation School Bell," which works with local schools to give socioeconomically disadvantaged students vouchers to buy new school-appropriate clothing.