



# The Vermont Women's Fund

A Component Fund of the Vermont Community Foundation

Philanthropy Inspiring Vermont Women and Girls Since 1995 Spring/Summer 2011

## The Power to Change Lives

Celebrating the 2011 Holly D. Miller Awards

When we invest in Vermont women and girls we are investing in change—for individuals, communities, and the world. The work of our grantees consistently demonstrates how grant dollars are transformed into programs that change lives. The impact is felt not only by the women and girls who participate, but also by the lives they go on to touch.

To celebrate the power of that process, each year The Vermont Women's Fund asks our grantees to nominate an outstanding participant in their program funded by the VWF for the Holly D. Miller Award. Named after the Burlington philanthropist and former VWF Council member, the award honors the strength, determination and achievements of women and girls when given the opportunities and resources they need to realize their potential.

On May 11th, over 200 people gathered at the VWF's Celebration of Vermont Women to recognize this year's award recipients and the vital programming of nonprofits around the state. Their inspiring stories bring our investment in women and girls to life.

**Heather Gilbert** may be soft spoken, but her voice has the power to inspire others. She credits **Mercy Connections** with acknowledging her abilities when she wasn't able see her own potential. Juggling several jobs and trying to support her family of four, she was involved in Mercy's programs first as a participant, then a volunteer, and now as an employee who is known for her innate teaching ability.

"At Mercy Connections we have two main tenets," explains former Executive Director Betsy Ferries. "We believe in walking patiently and unconditionally with people and asking them what they need to get ahead. Heather brings a background to walk the walk with those who have experienced generational poverty. She has a quiet and thoughtful way that allows others to speak and be heard. She challenges people with wise questions that nudge them to their own growth."

Heather has found that sharing her story not only strengthens her own voice, it also gives program participants hope. "I know what it's like to not be able



Pictured from left, the 2011 Holly D. Miller Award winners: Mandy Wooster, Gloria Mumbere, and Heather Gilbert  
Photo—Bethany Poulin

to get off that couch," she says. "That's where I was twelve years ago. I've walked in many of their shoes, and they look at me and think, 'You got this far, maybe I can too.'"

Heather was recently hired by Mercy Connections to run their "Getting Ahead in a Just Getting By World" program—the same program she once participated in. Now, acting as a facilitator, Heather watches for the moment when class participants' eyes light up. "When I see a spark I then pull apart what they are saying to find out what their passion is so they can find their own drive and make a plan."

Heather herself has incredible drive. In the last several years she has graduated from Johnson State College, run programs at her children's schools, presented at national conferences, and been an AmeriCorps Volunteer. In reflecting on the significance of leading the same program that once was her lifeline, Heather remarks, "My voice continues to grow stronger, and I am more focused and can be more supportive for others because now I am more supported. The people at Mercy believed in me when I didn't believe in myself. If no one had listened, I wouldn't be here today."

**Mandy Wooster** is an incredible example of a woman whose confidence, humor and perseverance have earned her the respect of many. *Continued on page 7*



The Vermont Women's Fund harnesses the collective power of giving to promote leadership, equality, economic independence and philanthropy for Vermont women and girls.

Our grants are made from an endowment built by gifts of all sizes from Vermonters like you!

Together, in 14 years of grantmaking, we have invested over \$1.2 million in organizations around the state, working to ensure that all women and girls realize their potential and building strong, vibrant communities throughout Vermont.

#### Council Members

Sally M. Ballin, Burlington  
Emily Blistein, Middlebury  
Kristin DeVoe-Talluto, Burlington  
Abigail D. Faulkner, East Montpelier  
Ann Fielder, Brattleboro  
Mary Grace, Morrisville  
Julie Hendrickson, Montpelier  
Judith Irving, Brookfield  
Lauren Geiger Moye, St. Johnsbury  
Sarah Suscinski, Barre  
Sarah Waring, Montpelier

#### Staff

Catherine Kalkstein  
Director  
Joanne MacIsaac  
Fund Coordinator

3 Court Street ♦ PO Box 30  
Middlebury, Vermont 05753  
(802) 398-2300

[www.vermontwomensfund.org](http://www.vermontwomensfund.org)

## Collective Power

By Ann Fielder, Council Chair

### *We are bound to one another by some simple but powerful beliefs*



This spring, I had the privilege of attending the Women's Funding Network's annual conference. This was my first time and it was a powerful experience! Being in the room with leaders from over 165 women's funds from six different continents inspired me and reaffirmed my commitment to the work of the VWF.

Globally, these funds represent tens of thousands of donors, change-makers and thought leaders and the Vermont Women's Fund is a part of that movement. We share with sister funds around the globe a belief in the power of collective giving and a passion for bringing women's ideas to the problem-solving table. As a movement we stand for social change for women and girls and are all bound to this purpose – and to one another – by some simple but powerful beliefs.

Here at The Vermont Women's Fund we believe that:

**Potential is what you make of it.** Every woman and girl holds hope within her. She just needs time, energy, and support to make it real.

**When you empower women and girls, all of society benefits.** Research shows that empowering women and girls benefits entire families and uplifts entire communities.

**Social change begins when you decide that change is possible.** We are agents of social change. Challenging roles. Changing circumstances. Raising expectations. Creating opportunities. Change is the first step toward making something better.

**Every woman can make a difference, no matter her place in life.** No more silent majority. We each have opportunities to improve our lives and the lives of others. We need to take advantage of those opportunities. Without apology or guilt.

**We don't just volunteer time. We volunteer our money, too.** We've come a long way, baby. Years ago, American women had very little financial power. Today, we are the largest economy on earth. We owe it to ourselves to have a say in how charitable funds are spent.

**Money matters. And every donation counts.** We raise funds so we can make grants that benefit women and girls. It's not just about the money. But without it—from million dollar gifts to two dollar donations—our good intentions and fine words are meaningless.

**We celebrate the back and forth of giving and receiving.** Money given to benefit women and girls flows in a circle. Those we help today may soon be more able—and more willing—to help others in the same way. We've seen it happen.

**We believe in focused giving. Our purpose is clear.** We're working to stop disasters before they happen. We support organizations that enhance the economic independence, leadership skills, and resources of women and girls in our community.

Instead of adding another spring appeal to your mailbox we have included a convenient reply envelope in this newsletter. You can also visit our website, [www.vermontwomensfund.org](http://www.vermontwomensfund.org), and click *Donate Now*.

**Please renew your commitment to the Women's Fund today by affirming these beliefs with an investment in women and girls!**

# 2011 Grant Awards

In 14 years of grantmaking, The Vermont Women's Fund has awarded **over \$1.2 million** to organizations around the state. We are Vermont's only grantmaker dedicated to investing in our state's women and girls by supporting programs that offer them the tools they need to build strong, healthy, empowered lives.

2011 marks the start of a new grantmaking approach for the VWF. Spurred by the desire to do more with our limited philanthropic dollars, we have launched a 3-year focused grantmaking initiative targeting programs that provide under-supported, under-resourced young women ages 15-25 with opportunities and experiences that expand their vision for their future. We are proud to support the following grantees who share our vision for Vermont's young women.



## Central Vermont Community Action Council (CVCAC)

*"NatureSkills: Community-based Learning"*  
Washington County \$10,000

This community-based science learning program fosters self-directed pathways to economic security through weekly science classes, field-based learning at EarthWalk Vermont, long-term mentoring and career building opportunities in partnership with the Department of Labor. In addition to earning credit towards a secondary credential, young women develop lifelong learning skills and critical community connections that increase self-awareness and widen their landscape of possible futures.



*NatureSkills participants in the field*

## Champlain Valley Area Health Education Center

*"MedQuest Health Careers Exploration"*  
Chittenden, Addison, Franklin, GI County \$4,500

Utilizing UVM College of Medicine students to help staff the program, MedQuest Champlain Valley provides an intensive residential, week-long program held on the UVM campus. Students travel to area hospitals, take part in job shadowing experiences, become CPR certified, gain comfort in health care and college environments and interact with health care professionals and students. The program allows participants to explore and strengthen their skills and resources for health career development.

## DREAM

*"Young Women's Leadership Program"*  
Chittenden, Addison, Rutland, Windsor Cty \$1,900

This four part program engages and challenges teen girls, allowing them to learn and grow in both single-sex and mixed settings. Through a summer camp session, two school-year Leadership Trainings, and a late spring Teen Retreat, the young women engage in workshops and hands-on activities that focus on leadership, role modeling, self-advocacy, job-readiness, and more. After successful completion of the program, participants are eligible for a part-time summer job with DREAM as a camp counselor-in-training or community intern-in-training.

## Gedakina

*"Native Women & Girls Community Wellness Circle"*  
Chittenden, Franklin, Winsor, Washington, Orange County \$10,000

The Wellness Circle is a multi-generational mentoring and support system that nurtures and encourages all women in the community, while focusing on their growth and wellbeing. Young women find emotional, educational, and cultural support, as well as a safety net and help with informed decision-making in their daily lives. In the Circle, they can address issues that impact themselves, their families and their communities as they transition from teens to young women.

## Girl Scouts of the Green & White Mtns

*"Girls Rock the Capitol"*  
Statewide \$7,500

Girls Rock the Capitol is a nationally recognized legislative internship program providing teen girls with leadership and advocacy skills. Teens are paired with women mentors in the Vermont House and Senate to learn about public policy, advocacy, political service, and civic engagement. Girls Rock participants learn practical skills like public speaking, interacting with mentors and leaders, how to affect positive change and explore how to be a leader in the public arena.

## 2011 Grant Awards



Past Girls Rock participants receiving the Enduring Democracy award for their work on the Constitutional amendment that allows 17 year olds to vote in primaries if they will be 18 by the general election

### **Governor's Institutes of Vermont** "Promoting Young Women in the Sciences" Statewide \$8,000

Young women continue to lag behind male classmates in pursuing science-related higher education and the high-salary professions that go along with degrees in science, math, engineering and information technology. Girls participating in the four science-related Governor's Institutes will gain the exposure, hands-on experience, peer support, and confidence to help close that gap and follow their dreams.

### **In-Sight Photography Project** "Digital Photography and Web Design" Windham County \$1,900

This 10-week class provides young women with the opportunity, materials and mentoring to develop marketable visual literacy skills while empowering them to express their views of the world. Students learn to use digital cameras and photo editing software as well as web design skills that result in a completed website featuring participants' photography portfolios. The young women will have the opportunity to work with a local organization or business to hone their professional skills and their website can be used in conjunction with a resume.

### **Mercy Connections** "Investigations in Economic Class in America" Chittenden County \$10,000

This 12-week workshop helps under-resourced young women who are involved with the Agency of Human Services Reach Up program prepare for college, gain life skills and strategize about their futures. Participants develop a plan for success that includes college

while finding a bridge to follow out of poverty. They learn to capitalize on their personal skills, learning styles and the new support networks they form in class. Two cycles of the workshop will be funded through this grant.

### **Northeastern Vermont Area Health Education Center** "MedQuest Health Careers Exploration" Caledonia, Lamoille, Essex, Orange, Washington, Orleans County \$6,300

Utilizing UVM College of Medicine students to help staff the program, MedQuest Northeastern Vermont provides an intensive residential, week-long program held on the campus of Lyndon State College. Students travel to area hospitals, take part in job shadowing experiences, become CPR certified, gain comfort in health care and college environments and interact with health care professionals and students. Participants are able to explore and strengthen their skills and resources for health career development.



MedQuest participants practicing on a patient simulator

### **Somali Bantu Community Association** "Rajo Women's Leadership Network" Chittenden County \$8,000

This leadership network is devoted to the specific needs and concerns of refugee and immigrant young women in the greater Burlington area. It features empowerment and financial literacy workshops, English language tutoring, career support, parenting workshops, an apprenticeship project for women's traditional arts and a mentor network linking Burlington community professionals to aspiring women. The program is overseen by Somali Bantu's Women's Committee and is provided for and by women in an effort to create a safe and comfortable environment for growth and development.

## 2011 Grant Awards

### **YWCA of Vermont**

*"YW Strive"*      *Statewide*      \$10,000

Strive provides an opportunity for teen girls to connect with other girls from across the state, network with women who hold exciting leadership roles and gain confidence and skills in a supportive environment. The program includes four overnight retreats for young women to identify their own strengths as future leaders, and practice essential leadership skills through a specific focus on leadership for the community, leadership for racial equity, and leadership for a sustainable environment.



*Strive participants celebrate at their final retreat*

### **Vermont Youth Conservation Corps**

*"Female Leadership Development—Community Crew"*      *Franklin County*      \$5,000

This intensive, 7-week, non-residential summer program for high school girls in the St. Albans area will provide opportunities for growth and leadership development through local conservation work. In a challenging and supportive all-women environment, participants will grow and gain a stronger understanding of teamwork, responsibility, goal-setting, self-confidence and active citizenship while learning from leaders in the conservation field. Weekly activities will also include a writing, reading and discussion program highlighting articles that focus on women overcoming adversity.

**Congratulations to our  
2011 Grantees!**

### **STRATEGIC PARTNER AWARDS**

Building upon the VWF's highly successful first round of Strategic Partner model funding, we are launching a new round in 2011. The following organizations will receive \$20,000 per year for up to three years for their work addressing young women's future economic independence.

#### **Rutland Region Workforce Investment Board**

*"Three Steps Forward"*      *Rutland County*

The Three Steps Forward Project is a new community collaboration aimed at increasing access for young women to existing local programs that will assist them in achieving employability and economic sustainability. Beginning with personal assessments to determine their academic levels in reading comprehension and math, as well as career skill sets and interests, a cohort of 20-25 young women per year will develop a personalized path centered on their interests and goals. The cohort will access education, training and skill building opportunities through Stafford Technical Center with a strong focus on "Tech Forward", a computer curriculum that will be the nucleus around which other services revolve. Additionally, job readiness and life skills will be developed through exposure to both traditional and nontraditional education programs, computer technology, career mentorships, personal and leadership development opportunities and community service experiences.

#### **Vermont Works for Women**

*"Voice, Visibility & Vocation: The Young Women's Project"*      *Chittenden County & Statewide*

This is a 3-pronged project with overarching goals to: 1) Increase the voice, visibility, and understanding of the needs of young women, ages 15-25, in Vermont; 2) Effect systemic and wide-reaching change by providing resources and training to adults who are already connected to—and have a great deal of influence upon—this population; and 3) Provide opportunities for young women in this age category to explore and pursue career options that lead to economic independence. Beginning with data gathering, the project will map resources and opportunities within the state that address the career or educational aspirations of young women – and any gaps that exist. VWW will then develop and implement their own programming for high school girls; and provide workshops for program providers serving youth, high school/Tech Center/college faculty, as well as parents/guardians. They will also further develop their existing experiential career events that expose young women to high-wage, high-growth nontraditional careers.

## Inspired Giving

"I grew up in a culture, (both conscious and unconscious), with the basic tenant that a woman did not count no matter who she was or what she accomplished. The only thing she was "good" for was her sexuality. That attitude is still rife in the general culture, in many hidden, unacknowledged ways and stereotypes. Whatever will help girls and women to find the deep truth of who they really are as females—to achieve competency in their many innate gifts; to find security within themselves; and to live their lives true to themselves, independent of the token pats on the back of society—this is why I support the work of The Vermont Women's Fund. It has taken me 30 years to come to this point. I am now 87, and I hope our girls and women today learn much earlier to accept and grow in how worthy they are as women, and in whatever they choose to do for life and work. For each woman is a treasure, and it is for her to distribute that wealth wisely in her own unique way."

~ Anne Mausolff Chester

"As a public interest attorney for a non-profit organization, I had assumed that planned giving would never be a viable option for me. I saw it as something reserved only for the wealthy. After attending an information session about planned giving, however, I was surprised to learn how much I had to offer and how easy it would be to make a bequest to The Vermont Women's Fund. It took a total of fifteen minutes out of my life. All I needed to do was call my life insurance agent and fill out a change in beneficiary form. At age 32, it feels great to know that I will be able to have an impact on supporting women and girls even after I am gone."

~ Sarah Suscinski, Barre

**To learn more about the ways that you too can leave a legacy for Vermont women and girls, please contact the VWF at (802) 398-2300 or info @vermontwomensfund.org**

## In Their Own Words...

### Reflections from Girls Rock the Capitol

"On Saturday when we were working on the map activity, I was completely astonished by how disproportionate the percentages are in the world. In America we are 5 percent of the world's population and our private consumption is six times that level at 32 percent. I realized that any little thing can help us reduce our consumption, but only if one person starts and everyone else follows." ~ Mikaela

"At the United Nations conference, I had the opportunity to learn from effective leaders. Leymah Gbowee, the woman that began the efforts that ended the war in Liberia through a successful revolution, was the greatest inspiration. Her message to the girls of the world was clear: fight for what you believe in. Leymah reminded us that it takes one person, with one dream, to change the world if you have faith in yourself and your idea. One of the most important things she reminded us is that the fight is never over. Before you finish celebrating, somewhere a girl has been forced into marriage as a child, a woman is raped, war continues to tearing families and communities apart, a girl is denied an education, and a woman isn't paid fair wages for her hard work." ~ Katie



Program participants at a weekend retreat, fall 2010

"Our group discussion the night before we went to the Vermont State House really made me think about the difference between volunteering and advocating. An advocate is someone who speaks up for lasting change." ~ Leah

**Girls Rock the Capitol, a program of the Girl Scouts of the Green & White Mtns, has received funding from the VWF for the past three years.**

She enlisted in the Coast Guard at age 17 and after five years of service went to work for an injection molding company where she was rapidly promoted. After several years, however, Mandy discovered that she was soon to be laid off. She felt strongly about finding a new job that would satisfy her desire to make a difference in her community and be an outstanding role model for her daughters. When Mandy learned about the Step Up to Law Enforcement program through **Vermont Works for Women** (VWW) she recalled the pride she felt serving in the Coast Guard and decided to apply. Step-Up to Law Enforcement is the first pre-Academy enforcement training program for women in the United States, and is designed to prepare qualified female candidates for the Vermont Police Academy or careers with Vermont Department of Corrections.



Photo—Bethany Poulin

Mandy took advantage of every opportunity that the comprehensive nine-week preparatory program had to offer. She approached it as if it were her job, and, after an extremely extensive interview process, was hired by the University of Vermont Police Service. "The program gave me support and provided a sounding board. Law enforcement is such a demanding profession and such a non-traditional job for women. There were times when I second guessed myself, but the folks at Vermont Works for Women were with me every step of the way," explains Mandy. Regarding her recent promotion to Sergeant, she says, "My favorite part of my job is not knowing what is going to happen each day."

Mandy gives back to Vermont Works for Women by serving as a strong advocate for the Step Up program and is one of the their most popular presenters. "It is powerful for the program participants to see and hear a successful woman who is balancing career and life," says Rachel Jolly, VWW Program Coordinator. "I try to give back," says Mandy, "but it isn't really anywhere close to what they have given me."

**Gloria Mumbere** demonstrates the potential of girls when given the opportunity to dream, to be heard, and to make a difference. Born in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Gloria moved to Burlington seven years ago and is now a senior at Burlington High School. She was selected to participate in Girls Rock the Capitol, a program of the **Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains**, which pairs teens with women in the Vermont Legislature in order to learn about political leadership and discover the impact their voice has in their State House and the broader world.



Photo—Bethany Poulin

Carmel Quinn, while Director of Advancement at the Girl Scouts, reflected on her experience working with Gloria, "When she first joined Girls Rock, Gloria doubted about her ability to have anything valuable to say, about writing a speech and about speaking to even a small group. Her increased awareness of the power of her voice was amazing to watch."

Gloria was one of four Girls Rock interns chosen to attend the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in February, 2011. She participated in a number of sessions focusing on women and girls, but it was her own presentation to 150 people that was the highlight of her experience in New York. She worked hard to get her thoughts down, to write and rewrite her work and to practice standing at the podium and using a microphone. Gloria was very scared and shaking before she spoke, but she says, "Even though I was feeling really nervous giving a speech, I still believed that I did a great job." Carmel agreed, "She spoke and those 150 people not only listened, but felt her words."

At The Vermont Women's Fund's celebration on May 11th, Gloria proved the power of her voice once again. "I have a goal," she stated. "I want to go to college to be a nurse because I want to help sick people. I want to open a hospital in the Congo." Those who know Gloria have every reason to believe that she will achieve her goals because of her amazing determination and leadership. She has worked diligently to access her voice, understand the importance of her message, and believe that peers and adults want to know what she has to say. Gloria is already recruiting girls for the next Girls Rock program and is interested in volunteering with the program after high school graduation. As Carmel remarked, "She is not just a leader of tomorrow, but is truly a leader today who will continue to make a difference in the world."



Governor Shumlin congratulating the award winners on May 11th Photo—Bethany Poulin

**The Celebration of Vermont Women is the VWF's largest fundraising event of the year. Through the generous support of donors, event attendees and business sponsors, \$30,000 has been raised as an investment in Vermont women and girls. If you were unable to attend, please consider making a gift in support of the event today!**



## The Vermont Women's Fund

*A Component Fund of the Vermont Community Foundation*

PO Box 30  
Middlebury, VT 05753

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Barre, VT 05641  
Permit No. 222

Invest in Women ❖ Build Strong Communities

### IN MEMORY

**Ann K. Holmblad**  
**1955-2010**



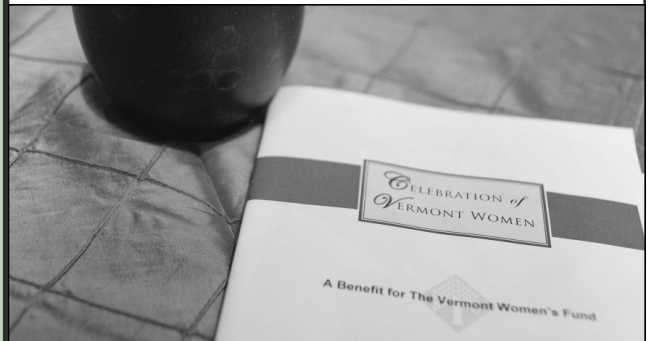
It is with sadness that we note the passing of former Vermont Women's Fund Council member, Ann Holmblad of Chester, VT.

Throughout the years, Ann was a strong voice for the advancement of women and girls and cared passionately about creating greater opportunities for them. She was also a dedicated advocate for the acceptance and rights of people with disabilities, helping them find their strengths and encouraging them to take advantage of opportunities to make their own unique contributions to the world we share.

Her vision and commitment will be missed.

### In this issue:

- **The Power to Change Lives:  
Celebrating the Holly D. Miller Awards**
- **2011 Grant Awards**
- **Reflections from Girls Rock the Capitol**



**Thank you to our lead sponsors of this year's  
Celebration of Vermont Women!**

**Armistead Caregivers  
Community National Bank  
National Life Group**