

# UNITED WAY OF THE MIDLANDS WOMEN UNITED®

*Leaders in the community inspiring change.*

## FROM WOMEN UNITED'S STEERING COMMITTEE CHAIR

***You are a member of Women United! Yes, YOU!***

Because of your generous donation of \$1500 or more to United Way of the Midlands, we say Welcome to Women United, formerly known as the Women's Leadership Council!

Even though our name has changed, we continue to be a group of women committed to educating, inspiring, celebrating and engaging our members. We are passionate about making a difference in our community! We continue to hold Lunch and Learns, educating our members about current topics affecting the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro area, and we choose special initiatives to become involved in and support financially.



Esther Brabec

Our Train to Gain initiative of 2015 raised an impressive \$450,000 in seven months! It supports training for youth program providers at 31 out-of-school time programs across Omaha. The Book Trust Initiative has put more than 52,000 books in the hands of elementary school children who otherwise might not have any at home, books they love reading and sharing with family members. Please see page 2 for more details.

Our newest initiative is Opportunity Youth, which aims to provide funds so that youths aged 16-24 who are not in school or in the workplace can receive help specific to their needs. Over 40 agencies in the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro area are working together to coordinate their services. They are members of the "Hub," the "guiding hand," which provides a coach to assist in meeting individual needs. We are thrilled to be joining United Way's efforts in Opportunity Youth. We invite you to check out the rest of this newsletter for updates on Opportunity Youth and our new name change. We at Women United warmly invite you to become involved with our group – YOUR group! We hope to see you in September for Day of Caring and in November for our next Lunch and Learn.

## WOMEN UNITED STEERING COMMITTEE

Pictured left to right:  
Karen Hawkins, Ia Hagan,  
Robyn Kortan, Julie Fritz,  
Annie Bird, Esther Brabec (chair),  
Sarah Waldman, Jess Pate



**IN THIS ISSUE:** **PAGE 2:**  
Train to Gain Wrap Up  
Book Trust Update

**PAGE 3:**  
Women United Name Change  
Opportunity Youth Introduction

United Way  
of the Midlands



# Leaders in the commu

## TRAIN TO GAIN WRAP UP

Compassion for our most vulnerable neighbors runs strong in our group, in concert with education and action. There's no greater evidence of this than the "Train to Gain for Student Success" initiative. In just seven short months, our group raised an impressive \$450,000 to support expanded training for front-line staff members at 31 out-of-school youth programs across Omaha. With this valuable professional development, the staff members are even better prepared to help children and teens become classroom ready, and one day, workforce ready.

The third year of Train to Gain officially started with the Summer Leadership Institute this past August. The goals that were established for this year were to provide Site Directors and their assistants with an interactive learning opportunity to explore their leadership identity, learn practical strategies for building an inclusive culture, implant research based program principles and give them the tools they need to build a strong out-of-school time program. They saw great representation from all 31 sites in the network.

As they deal with the challenges of attracting and developing quality staff to work with students, they will continue to leverage their new Site Director orientation to give leaders valuable information regarding the YPQI process and coaching. They will also look to implement monthly Leadership Lunch and Learns and use Cy Wakeman's book, "Reality-Based Leadership" in their monthly trainings as a tool to help coach staff at the site level. Their belief is if they can retain and equip quality professionals to see themselves as leaders, they will in turn impact the next generation to aspire to be leaders.

*"This institute has opened my eyes to how I can better support my team and help them achieve their full potential."*

*- Participant*

## BOOK TRUST UPDATE

Nearly 2,200 students experienced the life-changing magic of reading during the 2016-2017 school year through a partnership between United Way of the Midlands, Women United and Book Trust. With a stipend of \$7 each month, students scoured the Scholastic flier and chose books based on their personal interests. Principals dressed up as book characters. Volunteers joined students regularly to celebrate the monthly arrival of books. One student at Westgate Elementary called the book delivery day "the best day of my life." By the end of the year, K-3rd graders at 10 schools in six districts selected and received more than 52,833 books they could call their own, take home and share with friends and family.



In the 2017-2018 school year, the pilot will continue in the existing partner schools. UWM will work with these schools to understand how Book Trust is executed and determine if there is a link between Book Trust implementation methods and student motivation to read. UWM will also expand its work to pinpoint the impacts of Book Trust by understanding grade-level reading changes among schools in the regions that are not currently participating in Book Trust.

- Reading skills improved among participating students. On average, teachers reported that **51%** of their classroom was reading on grade level at the end of the school year, up from 37% at the beginning of the year.

- On average **71%** of their classroom enjoyed reading at the end of the school year.

- **67%** of teachers report that reading is the most important part of the day; an increase from 57% at the beginning of the school year.

- **82%** of teachers reported that their students took their Book Trust books home every month.

- At the beginning of the year, teachers reported that **30%** of families never discussed books or reading during parent-teacher dialogue. That percentage decreased to less than 10% by the end of the year.

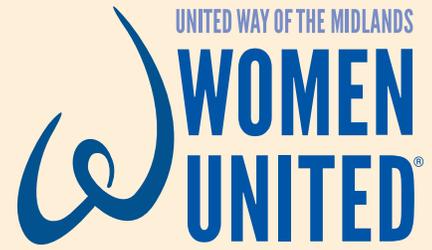
# unity inspiring change.

## WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP COUNCIL to WOMEN UNITED

The Women's Leadership Council in the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro was founded in 2008. It was an ambitious grassroots model, grounded in the idea that addressing the most critical local needs will help lift a community as a whole. Women leaders are empowered to speak up, unite and take action on issues that hit closest to home through their giving, volunteering and advocating. There is a local presence in more than 165 local United Ways and 70,000 members.

Why the name change? There is strategic value in rallying around the strong and passionate women leaders who are positively impacting change. Research has indicated that "Women United" gives the visibility of being an integral part of the United Way organization and describes women as a unified front.

As we look to this next year, our goal is to encourage more women to join and get involved in making our community stronger. We will explore reaching out to the supportive companies running workplace campaigns and leveraging the strong women there to help make a lasting difference.



*For more information about serving on a Women United committee, please contact Jill Samuelson at 402.522.7922, la Hagan at 402.617.4928 or email [womenunited@uwmidlands.org](mailto:womenunited@uwmidlands.org).*

## OPPORTUNITY YOUTH INTRODUCTION

Today in our community there are more than 8,000 "Opportunity Youth," defined as individuals who are 16 to 24 years old and not in school or working. It is unfortunate that we have a group of young adults with high potential who desire a better future but may have lost their way or don't know who to turn to. These individuals may not have a support system that provides them guidance, encouragement or help if they are in a crisis. We are blessed to live in a strong community where we offer a hand to those in need, rather than look the other way.

United Way of the Midlands has started down a path within our community to bring together key organizations to collaborate on the needs of these young adults we call Opportunity Youth. We have organized local efforts, along with support from a national organization, to help identify the steps to take to have an effective program. Our program would leverage multiple services for an individual in an effort to make the process easier and more efficient. The outcome from the collaborative efforts is a coordinated system that an Opportunity Youth would now have access to one person, "the navigator," to assist in helping direct this individual through the supports needed to achieve stability, including basic needs, education, workforce and both physical and mental services.

We know there is a need for such a program, and we have funded (with the help of a grant) a pilot program called the Hub. This pilot program started in July 2017 and ran through the end of June 2018. The Hub is based out of Project Everlast, a program operated by Nebraska Children's and Families, and is comprised of 40 plus local agencies who are collaborating with each other.

Women United has, after rigorous research and vetting, selected Opportunity Youth as our next initiative to raise funds to help these young individuals have a bright and successful future. More information will follow on how you can get involved. Our goal is to raise \$200,000 a year for the next three years.

**There are more than 8,000 "Opportunity Youth" defined as individuals who are 16 to 24 years old disconnected from school or work.**

United Way  
of the Midlands



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## WHAT IS WOMEN UNITED?

Women United (WU) is a powerful network of caring women who invest their time, talent and resources to explore and address critical issues facing the Omaha-Bellevue-Council Bluffs metropolitan area.

## HOW DE WE ACCOMPLISH THIS?

*Educate. Volunteer. Invest.*

WU has a unique model of targeted educational and volunteer opportunities that assist our members in gaining deeper, first-hand knowledge of the issues that face our metropolitan area. Prepared with this heightened understanding of not only the needs, but the solutions, WU members strengthen our community and make a positive difference through their investment in the work of United Way.

## WHO QUALIFIES FOR MEMBERSHIP?

The generous support of a Toqueville Society (\$10,000+) or Bridgebuilders Society (\$1,500+) contribution automatically qualifies female donors for membership in WU.

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS

### SEPTEMBER 18: UWM AND BCBS TECHNICOLOR RUN

@Stinson Park, 5:30pm – Join us in Aksarben Village for this colorful one-mile walk/5k run, hosted by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Nebraska! The event is open to the public, and family and friends are invited to join.

### SEPTEMBER 20: WU NEW MEMBER WELCOME

@Midtown Crossing Club Room, 4:30 - 6:30pm

### SEPTEMBER 21: UWM DAY OF CARING

This annual event sees hundreds of volunteers serving at a variety of projects at local nonprofit and civic organizations.

**Register at [www.unitedwaymidlands.org/DayofCaring](http://www.unitedwaymidlands.org/DayofCaring)**

### OCTOBER 11: WU VOLUNTEER - WINE, CHEESE AND TOOTHPASTE

@Avenue Scholars, 5 - 7pm – A volunteer event to put together care kits to benefit Opportunity Youth

### OCTOBER 19: UWM ANNUAL MEETING

@Hilton Omaha – 11:30am - 1pm

### NOVEMBER 28: WU LUNCH AND LEARN

@Security National Bank – 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.