

Author Kris Radish says little acts make big difference

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For every middle-aged woman who gets up in the morning and takes her calcium, vitamins and blood pressure medicine before downing her oats to start the day, Kris Radish has a message: You can make a difference in the lives of others.

Even when every day seems a challenge and getting older seems not getting better, she points to herself as a testament to that overarching truth. The best-selling author, 56, told the estimated audience of 1,000 at the 10th annual Women's Fund luncheon Thursday at the Radisson Paper Valley Hotel in Appleton that for much of her life, she struggled. Radish now is a University of Wisconsin graduate and the author of seven novels, including the newly released "Hearts on a String."

Through her books, she explained, she writes to empower women. She tells stories that are born of real experiences and real people that come to life in fiction and are relatable. So relatable, in fact, that she hears daily from readers who have drawn inspiration from her writing.

"I am a woman, and I write for women and really smart men," she quipped.

She encouraged women to live their personal passion and make a difference in the world, saying that a smile or simple act of kindness can make a difference in someone's day.

And, she said, by supporting the Women's Fund, which gives grants to programs that improve community by investing in the needs and talents of women and girls, donors are fueling others' dreams and inspiring still more paying it forward.

Becky Boulanger, executive director of the Women's Fund, said the event was a way to inspire.

"We try to make the message of our luncheon upbeat and inspiring each year," Boulanger said. "But it is also an opportunity for us to shine the spotlight on important issues in our community. We want to inform our audience about how they can help make sure women and girls in our community are safe and economically secure."

To that end, nonprofits that have received grants from the Women's Fund this year, displayed information about their programs prior to the event.

The J. J. Keller Foundation has offered the Women's Fund a \$10,000 challenge grant in celebration of the 10th anniversary of the luncheon. The J. J. Keller Foundation match will be used to fund the Women's Fund's Financial Fluency Initiative for the coming year. Gifts from new donors, or an increase from the most recent gift by existing donors, will qualify for a dollar for dollar match. Gifts must be received by Sept. 30 to be eligible.

The Women's Fund was founded in 1994. Since that time the organization has awarded nearly \$400,000 in grants to support 121 local projects to improve and enhance the lives of women and girls.