



LISTENING TO WOMEN FOR CHANGE

A SUMMARY OF LISTENING SESSIONS
CONDUCTED FOR WOMEN AGES 18-25

PREPARED BY:
WOMEN'S FUND EDUCATION COMMITTEE
JUNE 2007

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	3
LISTENING TO WOMEN FOR CHANGE	3
SUMMARY OF LISTENING SESSION RESULTS.....	4
Q1: WHAT IS YOUR REACTION TO THE RESEARCH BY THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN WISCONSIN & FOX CITIES 2006 L.I.F.E. STUDY? IS IT RELEVANT BASED ON YOUR EXPERIENCE?	4
Q2: BASED ON YOUR EXPERIENCE, WHAT ISSUES ARE SIGNIFICANT FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS IN THE FOX CITIES?	5
<i>Education:</i>	5
<i>Mentoring/Job Sharing:</i>	6
<i>Financial Issues:</i>	6
<i>Basic Life Skills:</i>	6
<i>Employment:</i>	6
<i>Physical and Mental Healthcare:</i>	6
<i>Transportation:</i>	6
<i>Social Pressure – Self Image:</i>	7
<i>Eligibility/Availability of Services:</i>	7
<i>Child Care:</i>	7
<i>Domestic Violence:</i>	7
<i>Housing:</i>	7
<i>Social Outlets:</i>	7
Q3: ARE THERE EXISTING PROGRAMS THAT YOU ARE AWARE OF THAT ASSIST WOMEN AND GIRLS TO OVERCOME BARRIERS?.....	8
Q4: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO NEXT GENERATION OF GIRLS?	8
Q5: WHAT CAN THE WOMEN’S FUND DO TO ASSIST WOMEN AND GIRLS REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL AND REALIZE THEIR DREAMS?	9
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LISTENING SESSION PROCESS	10
PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS	11
APPENDIX A: LISTENING SESSION PRESENTATION	12

LISTENING TO WOMEN FOR CHANGE

A SUMMARY OF LISTENING SESSIONS CONDUCTED FOR WOMEN AGES 18-25

INTRODUCTION

The vision of the Women's Fund for the Fox Valley Inc. is to be the recognized leader of philanthropic opportunities that encourage and inspire women and girls to flourish personally, economically and professionally. We work towards this vision by accomplishing our mission of investing in women and girls through grants, advocacy and education. The Education Committee for the Women's Fund supports both the vision and the mission by:

- Gathering information about the needs and potential of women and girls in the Fox Valley region;
- Creating and facilitating programs that educate and raise the awareness of the community at large, provider agencies, the Grants Committee, and other volunteers about the needs and potential of women and girls in the Fox Valley;
- Presenting programming that helps develop philanthropists dedicated to the advancement of women and girls; and
- Educating women and girls about their potential as philanthropists.

In the fall of 2005, the Education Committee began reviewing the recent completion of a series of community forums hosted by the Women's Fund regarding the results of the *Status of Women in Wisconsin* by the Institute for Women's Policy Research. This detailed report presents a grading of the State on key indicators, such as political participation, employment and earnings, social and economic autonomy, reproductive rights, and health and well-being. The conclusion of the forums presented the opportunity for the Women's Fund Education Committee to evaluate how it gathers information about women and girls and how it can use this information to raise the awareness of the issues in the community and serve the mission and vision of the Women's Fund for the Fox Valley Region, Inc. The result of these conversations by the Education Committee was the development of the *Listening to Women for Change* needs assessment project.

LISTENING TO WOMEN FOR CHANGE

The Education Committee crafted the scope of work of the *Listening to Women for Change* as a pilot project that would be reviewed and analyzed after the completion for its effectiveness in identifying the needs of women and girls and ease of obtaining the data in the listening session format.

In order to systematically tackle this project the Committee decided to focus on a subset of the total female population with the women ages 18-25 years as the pilot group. Special emphasis was placed on trying to reach the "average" women in our community, in addition to population groups that have special needs or

challenges. In other words, the Committee did not want to just reach out to women that are already being served by social services organizations.

A presentation was developed that was used to introduce the Women’s Fund and its role in the community, provide an overview of the *Status of Women in Wisconsin* and the 2006 Fox Cities L.I.F.E Study as two resources used by the Women’s Fund to understand community needs, and then opened up the dialog with a series of five questions. A copy of the listening sessions presentation is included in Appendix A.

The first listening sessions was held in April 2006 with Community First Credit Union. The next three presentations for this age group were held in the remainder of 2006 and into early 2007 with Lawrence University, Harmony Café, and Harbor House clients. Several other listening sessions were pursued for this age group, including one at University of Wisconsin – Fox Valley in which no one signed up to participate. The challenges with the timing and securing of listening sessions will be addressed in the end of this report as part of the recommendations for listening session process section.

Two other listening sessions were held over this period of time, including one with Harbor House Staff and Fox Valley Technical College (FVTC). Interesting to our project was the average age of FVTC students is greater than 25 year, so the actual participants exceeded this age group. The results of the FVTC will be incorporated into the appropriate age report. The discussion with Harbor House Staff was a wonderful opportunity to dialog with the staff given the recent increase in domestic violence in the Fox Cities. The Harbor House Staff results will also be incorporated into a separate report.

Overall the discussions with the 18-25 year age group were interesting and educational. The following is a report of the findings of the listening sessions discussions from the four listening sessions for this age group.

SUMMARY OF LISTENING SESSION RESULTS

Q1: WHAT IS YOUR REACTION TO THE RESEARCH BY THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN WISCONSIN & FOX CITIES 2006 L.I.F.E. STUDY? IS IT RELEVANT BASED ON YOUR EXPERIENCE?

This question was the first to open the listening session discussions following the brief overview of the Women’s Fund and results of the two studies (a copy of the presentation is included as Appendix A). With the amount of data in each of the studies, it was important to the Education Committee to determine what the “average” woman in the Fox Cities thought about the data.

- A. Education Level: shocked that education level was low. If you could improve this, health might improve as well as ratio of earnings and political participation.
- B. Mental Health: scary statistic.
- C. We may have more school opportunities in our area, but still people don’t go on. Encourage people to go on.
- D. Diversity (racial and ethnic) an advantage as compared to rural areas.
- E. Create awareness of this data so people understand.
- F. Let women know opportunities for assistance exist.
- G. Treatment centers less accessible, lots shutting down. Insurance doesn’t cover.
- H. More people in poverty than statistics show.
- I. More single mothers in poverty in the area.
- J. What about teenage statistics 19% higher teenage pregnancy than 2 years ago.

- K. Parents gone working to pay for basic needs, so children get into more trouble (pregnancy, drugs).
- L. Day care costs. Available at H.S.?
- M. No real surprises with the data.

Q2: BASED ON YOUR EXPERIENCE, WHAT ISSUES ARE SIGNIFICANT FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS IN THE FOX CITIES?

The following are the thirteen areas of primary importance to the participants of the listening sessions for the 18-25 year old group along with the comments that correspond to the areas of concern. If an area of concern was stated multiple times among listening session groups the comments were consolidated into one comment. However, to help illustrate the frequency of items in each area of concern, the table chart at the end of this section illustrates the number of comments by category for each of the listening sessions. The top four areas of concern for the 18-25 year old age group based on the frequency of comments are, in order:

- Financial issues
- Basic life skills
- Eligibility/availability of services
- Employment

It is important to note that the participants were candid in their feedback based on remaining anonymous. The table and chart is provided for reference for the Women’s Fund only and should be not disclosed to others since it identifies the listening sessions groups.

The Education Committee also believes it is important to note that these core issues are the perceptions of this age group based on the four listening sessions completed. Their perceptions are their reality. These perceptions exist regardless of whether the Women’s Fund understands that there may already exist programs and services that focus on these areas of concerns.

EDUCATION:

- A. Resources are not available to women without high school degree.
- B. There’s no time to complete additional schooling if you are working two jobs.
- C. Need more flexible class times.
- D. Hard to afford school – most women can’t!
- E. Felt that more women than men drop out of high school/college.
- F. Women with “trade” jobs should get higher wages.
- G. Need for improved placement services through colleges for better jobs with higher wages upon graduation.
- H. Women should be encouraged to pursue more traditionally male fields – especially science and math.
- I. Need for more readily available resources for young girls and women.
- J. Insufficient financial assistance to match the high costs of a college education.
- K. Need for more encouragement to keep young women in school.
- L. Elementary schools must work with young children regarding the role of women and healthy relationships.
- M. Need training sessions to help break the poverty cycle.

MENTORING/JOB SHARING:

- A. Women need to be encouraged to pursue more traditional male fields – especially science and math.
- B. More availability of apprenticeships would be helpful.
- C. Young women need to be mentored to combat social pressure regarding body image.
- D. Mentoring could be a means to building self-esteem.
- E. Some women felt that their time in jail was their best source of information.

FINANCIAL ISSUES:

- A. It's difficult to live paycheck to paycheck.
- B. Women frequently do not receive child support.
- C. Wisconsin is an expensive state to live in.
- D. Available emergency financial help is a gap in our system.
- E. Insurance costs are unaffordable for single women.
- F. Time off for maternity leave is not always paid.
- G. Health insurance costs too high, even if provided by employer.
- H. Women frequently find that it takes a number of jobs to survive.
- I. Difficult to pay school loans, sometimes, with wages earned after college graduation.

BASIC LIFE SKILLS:

- A. Need to learn to budget – sacrifice now to save for later.
- B. Have to deal with credit cards and credit card debt.
- C. Basic life skill tools need to be taught in school.
- D. Many young women do not have these tools.
- E. Need to increase awareness that safety concerns often depend upon decision-making skills.

EMPLOYMENT:

- A. Hard to find a full time job with benefits.
- B. Need to work many minimum wage jobs to survive.
- C. Some fields do not provide a good wage, even with a college degree.
- D. Women with “trade” jobs should get higher wages.

PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTHCARE:

- A. Healthcare becomes more of an issue when a woman has children.
- B. Single moms have a more difficult time finding assistance than two parents do.
- C. Cost of health insurance is high; coverage poor.
- D. Health insurance too high, even if provided by an employer.
- E. Maternity benefits are not always provided.
- F. Need to have a full time job, at least, to receive benefits.
- G. Hard to find affordable treatment for physical, dental, or mental health care.

TRANSPORTATION:

- A. Difficult to find job without transportation.
- B. Not enough public transportation for second shift.
- C. Difficult to work in a neighboring community.

SOCIAL PRESSURE – SELF IMAGE:

- A. Some women don't care about the ethics of working. Some are willing to stay at home and collect assistance, rather than put forth the effort to work.
- B. Need more guidance/mentoring in combating social pressures of body image.
- C. Encourage women to pursue more traditional male fields – especially science.

ELIGIBILITY/AVAILABILITY OF SERVICES:

- A. More difficult for single women to access services.
- B. Hard to get assistance because gross income is used to determine availability.
- C. There are some incentives not to work – harder they work, fewer benefits are available.
- D. Difficult to get financial aid information.
- E. Difficult to pay school loans, sometimes, with wages earned after college graduation.
- F. Home ownership can cost a woman some of her benefits.
- G. Because of the culture of our community, there are fewer tools to help women deal with adversities such as pregnancy.
- H. Women felt there was a lack of programming for young adult women – 20 +.
- I. Need to have Planned Parenthood more readily available to help with women's health issues.

CHILD CARE:

- A. Difficult to find in order to work.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:

- A. No resources available at school regarding domestic violence.
- B. Schools have no direct connection to Harbor House.
- C. Administration not trained regarding domestic violence.
- D. Not enough is being done to support women– especially regarding domestic violence.
- E. Schools don't treat female students with the respect due mature individuals.
- F. School officials cannot be trusted.
- G. Schools often look the other way.
- H. More reports of domestic abuse in last few years.
- I. Need to increase awareness that safety concerns are dependent upon decision-making skills.
- J. Need more intervention about healthy/nonhealthy behaviors. High school abuse is an issue.

HOUSING:

- A. Affordable apartments are not always nice places to live.
- B. Hard for single women to buy homes. They lose benefits if they own a house.
- C. Difficult to find affordable housing that fits a budget.

SOCIAL OUTLETS:

- A. Need for more opportunities to encourage individuality and to learn more about others.
- B. Women felt a need for social and educational programming serving women 20+.

Q3: ARE THERE EXISTING PROGRAMS THAT YOU ARE AWARE OF THAT ASSIST WOMEN AND GIRLS TO OVERCOME BARRIERS?

The Education Committee included this question to determine the perception of successful programs and overall awareness of existing programs and services that serve women and girls in the Fox Cities area.

- A. WIC
- B. Planned Parenthood
- C. YMCA scholarships for membership
- D. High schools
- E. Girl Scouts – bonding and learning: woman together, and outreach to Hmong and Hispanic populations
- F. Harmony Café
- G. Boys and Girls Club-single parents program, and kid programs
- H. Harbor House
- I. Homeless Shelter-family care case workers
- J. Salvation Army
- K. Big Brothers/Big Sisters and mentoring
- L. Habitat for Humanity
- M. NAMI
- N. Job Center
- O. It seems like these programs are not something you qualify for when you are working. No programs for “young adult” mothers (20+).

Q4: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO NEXT GENERATION OF GIRLS?

This questions was designed by the Education Committee to allow for some reflection by participants on how to help the next generation of girls in the Fox Cities. It was intended to be an open-ended response.

- A. Parents – bond with parents or some other adult. Know whom you can talk to if you have problems.
- B. Mentoring – encourage girls to talk to other adults. Maybe lists through guidance department.
- C. It is hard to ask for help – need to learn how to ask.
- D. There is no “right” way. Everyone needs to find their own path.
- E. If you are uncertain, don’t be afraid to take a year off. High schools perhaps put too much pressure. Longer you wait, harder you work? Or is it too hard to go back to school? Some were happy they were pushed.
- F. Assist in finding opportunities for women.
- G. Don’t hurry into marriage/or babies. Find yourself first?
- H. Self esteem? Don’t depend on others for that?
- I. Don’t get into drugs.
- J. Create more opportunities.
- K. Don’t identify themselves through men. Sexy pressure on young girls. Appearance focus.
- L. Respect for elders.
- M. Don’t just watch TV/computer. Do community service, get involved with elderly.
- N. Learn from people around you (age).

- O. Invest in education for *self*. Appleton has excellent school program. AP classes help college career.
- P. Job shadowing-youth understand what is out there-make better choices.
- Q. Informational pamphlets. 101 things to do on a rainy day. (101 reasons why not to run away).
- R. Hobbies, more activities for youth (13-16 yrs) this age most likely to make bad choices. Explore the realm of partying.
- S. Women need to be better informed about their options. They need to realize that they must advocate for themselves, seek opportunities and become more self-sufficient. Women should find their own path.
- T. At the same time, they need to be realistic about expectations. Not everyone will or should attend college; it is not a silver bullet – other options have value. Nor should women fall into “male-bashing” instead of taking some active steps.
- U. Finish education.
- V. Have a back-up plan for jobs, school or anything so you don’t get stuck trying to start from scratch.
- W. Think over every decision you make carefully (i.e., children, college, etc.).
- X. Educate yourself on what school doesn’t cover (i.e., domestic violence).
- Y. The Internet is very useful to locate information if you cannot find help. You cannot rely on everyone else to do it for you.

Q5: WHAT CAN THE WOMEN’S FUND DO TO ASSIST WOMEN AND GIRLS REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL AND REALIZE THEIR DREAMS?

The solicitation of recommendations for how the Women’s Fund can help women and girls was an open-ended opportunity for feedback. The vast majority of the participants had never heard of the Women’s Fund and their only knowledge of our organization was from the brief overview in the listening session presentation (see Appendix A for a copy of the presentation).

- A. Listen and hear what needs to be done.
- B. Spread the information/awareness about these issues.
- C. Assistance with job placement after college. Women recommending and assisting with jobs out there – Networking.
- D. Job shadowing – to see if you want those jobs. Realistic information on jobs. More in-depth “career” fairs. On a professional level.
- E. Scholarship information – resources for college.
- F. Programs that make it seem okay to be single (like t-ball, sports, etc.).
- G. More information.
- H. Scholarships.
- I. Educational events.
- J. Career building programs.
- K. Opportunities for teenage girls (too old for Boys and Girls Club). Just need stuff.
- L. Job Shadow. Get to know young women in the community. Hard to look into future when young. Difficult to grasp concepts. Meet women. Convention.
- M. Help young women address the “I’m graduating from college (high school) – now what?” Provide advice and information/stories of how women got to where they are today. How did they decide and how did/do they fit their various roles together. Challenge the mass media image of super woman.
- N. Address the factor that financial needs often push people into committing to someone (boyfriend, husband, roommate) because of economic needs.

- O. Panels of women in different situations (life styles, incomes, work positions, ages, career/job stages (new, veteran, returned to work after hiatus) who will share their stories – challenges, failures, successes, etc.
- P. A respite center where caregivers can take children for a time to provide a break for themselves. (There is such a place in Madison.)
- Q. Establish support groups comprised of parents whose children are developmentally challenged – especially on the elementary school level.
- R. Educate women on where to find information about their needs – especially how to use electronic sources (internet). Tackle the computer access problem with classes/workshops on using the computer to do so.
- S. Educate youth to not drop out of school, finish college.
- T. Help women with young children so they can work.
- U. Change the school system – add more services to school.
- V. Schools didn't take concerns seriously.
- W. Affordable housing. Many kids ages 16-17 need to move out due to bad conditions at home and have no options for housing and no family.
- X. Transitional living program in Milwaukee teaches people how to establish housing, life skills, how to be independent. It would be a good program for the Women's Fund to look at.
- Y. Some girls are not taught basic skills for living so a program to help with this would be important.
- Z. People don't know where to go after living in the shelter. What are options?

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LISTENING SESSION PROCESS

The Education Committee is pleased to submit this report for review by the Women's Fund Board of Directors. As part of this pilot listening session process the Education Committee spent time evaluating this needs assessment procedure and discussed the different courses of action that could be taken next by the Women's Fund. The following is a summary of these different opportunities that the Education Committee respectfully submits for consideration by the Women's Fund Board.

- A. Continued analysis of the data for the 18-25 year age group to be used for supporting the case for donors, raising community awareness, and evaluating the role the Women's Fund could play to address concerns.
- B. Conduct a second round of listening sessions for the next age group. Modify the procedure used for the listening sessions by hosting all of the discussions in the same month or two to condense the total timeline for the process and allow for additional time for analysis. This new round would allow for comparison of age group concerns.
- C. Use this data and evaluate the potential role the Women's Fund could play in raising the level of awareness about existing programs and services in the community that can help women and girls. The lack of awareness of programs and eligibility for services was one of the top concerns for this age group. The Education Committee discussed several existing programs that would be beneficial to this group as well as the broader community if there were a better understanding of the services, such as the United Way Fox Cities 211 help line and website.

PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

Each participant of the listening sessions was asked to complete an optional form that asks for socio-economic and demographic characteristics. The information is confidential on an individual basis but it is interesting to understand the overall composition of the participants in terms of the responses and potential population gaps as we try to understand the perceptions, needs and challenges of this overall age group. One clear gap is the overall lack of racial diversity in the participants for this age group.

Marital Status:

Never Married	Married	Separated	Divorced	Widowed
95%	5%	0%	0%	0%

Race:

White	Black or African American	American Indian and Alaska Native	Asian	Native Hawaiian
95%	5%	0%	0%	0%

Hispanic or Latino:

Yes	No
0%	100%

Age:

Under 18 Years	18-25 Years	26-40 Years	40-55 Years	56-65 Years
5%	95%	0%	0%	0%

Total Household Income:

Less than \$10,000	\$10,000 to 24,999	\$25,000 to 34,999	\$35,000 to 49,999	\$50,000 to 74,999	\$75,000 or More
30%	30%	20%	0%	5%	10%

Presence of Children:

No Children	Children	Number of Children Under 18 Years	Total Number of Children
75%	25%	6	6

Education Attainment:

Less than 9th Grade	9-12th Grade, No Diploma	High School Graduate	Some College, No Degree	Associates Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Graduate or Professional Degree
0%	25%	0%	45%	10%	20%	0%

APPENDIX A: LISTENING SESSION PRESENTATION

This is a separate PDF of the Power Point Presentation.