

Women's success born of deep roots

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APPLETON -- Three women recounted three different journeys "from roots to wings" Thursday at the Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region's third annual **Women's Fund** luncheon. Stephanie Streeter, Menasha's Banta Corp. president and chief executive officer, described how she used her roots to springboard to success in big-time college basketball at Stanford University and later in the business world.

North High School Associate Principal Yvette Dunlap talked about how she had to dig up deeply planted Chicago roots 13 years ago to move north to Appleton, a change in life's direction she never intended.

Rebecca Ryan, president of Jackson-based Next Generation Consulting and a former professional basketball player in Europe, shared how her dream took wing when she learned what to "add, change and eliminate" to "take a big step up in life."

Speaking with humor and poignancy to a record crowd of 900 at the Radisson Paper Valley Hotel, the trio provided the centerpiece for this year's theme, "Roots & Wings."

Before the luncheon, the three talked about the values that solidified their roots, passed down from some other pretty influential women: their grandmothers.

For Streeter, a firm believer in starting with "what you know you know" before using will, ingenuity and sass to take flight, Grandma Sylvia and her unconditional love made an important difference.

"She was my biggest supporter, my biggest fan," Streeter said. "She was always there. No matter what I did, it was OK."

For Dunlap, who also carries strong images of her African roots, a big influence was Grandma Daisy, a World War II-era single mother who never wavered from goals and what she expected of her family. "She had a sure sense of where we'd go in the culture and society in the future, and in my case, where I should be in it."

Dunlap thought she had a clear sense of where she was headed too, until she was forced to transplant and grow here, where she said she has experienced her greatest challenges and blessings.

Developing patience, tolerance, humility and courage "strengthened my wings," she said. Now that she has found new ways to contribute she is grateful. "I've

been healed and uplifted by a community where most people don't look like me," she said.

Ryan said she is still learning about her Grandmother Erna, another single parent. "She never talked much, but when she spoke you paid attention."

When college scouts wrote the 6-foot-tall Ryan off because of her small hands, Erna had the right answer, telling her granddaughter, "It doesn't matter how big your hands are. It's what you do with them."

The door to NCAA basketball may have slammed shut, but a greater adventure awaited her as a professional. "Sometimes the world has a bigger dream for you than you have for yourself," she told the audience Thursday.

Also featured was a special guest, Chicago transplant and committed volunteer Helen Strobl, who at 86 embodies the philanthropy that has grown out of the annual luncheon. Hearing stories of other women in previous years inspired her participation in the fund, she said. A charitable "future fund" has been created in her name and will be continued by her daughter and granddaughter.

Pat Schinabeck, **Women's Fund** executive committee chairwoman, considered the large crowd of mostly women a good sign. "Until we started the luncheon three years ago, no one knew the **Women's Fund** existed. Every year the evidence of what we're doing to help women and girls grows."

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