

Women's Fund event champions change for better lifestyle

Post-Crescent, The (Appleton, WI) - September 6, 2002

Author: Kara Patterson, Post-Crescent staff writer

APPLETON -- Almost a decade after she quit a Chicago high school six weeks into her senior year, Barb Helwink has earned her diploma. To her surprise, Helwink, 28, of Appleton, received that diploma Thursday in front of about 850 guests who attended the **Women's Fund** of the Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region's second annual luncheon, "Changing the Dance... One Step at a Time."

Luncheon proceeds benefit community programs that enrich the lives of women and girls, like the Emergency Shelter of the Fox Valley Inc. programs that assisted Helwink.

Working through the changing beats of her life's dance -- a son's stitches, a daughter's illness, a back injury -- Helwink persevered to complete her high school education in memory of her father, who passed away last December.

"My dad was very disappointed when I dropped out of school," Helwink said. "He was putting us through private school. I wanted to say to him, 'Look what I got.'"

A \$5,000 grant from the **Women's Fund** in 2000 supports the Emergency Shelter children's program that Helwink's four young children have attended since last November, when she began her studies there through Fox Valley Technical College.

"My children will be disappointed that they will not be able to go to the children's program" now that their mother has reached her goal, said Helwink, laughing.

Luncheon speaker M. Elinor Smith of Landmark Staffing Resources Inc. encouraged attendees to focus on change within themselves, while Juanita Makaroff of the Makaroff School of Ballet demonstrated that when people lend strength to each other, life's challenges cannot lay low their spirits.

"Mental health is not the absence of problems," said speaker Tom Jadin, a local counselor and consultant. "It's the way we deal with problems and keep on trucking."

Appleton Area School District Supt. Thomas Scullen said the luncheon's lessons resonated with the message schools convey to young women.

"Men have learned to bond and network," Scullen said. "Women need to do that. And what better place for our students, seeing women in leadership positions."

Appleton North High School associate principal Yvette Dunlap brought as her guest a new North senior, Erin Hanson.

Hanson, 17, formerly of La Crosse, said it was good to see the involvement of women in this community.

"It's reassuring to hear a 'be yourself' message," she said.

Women's Fund executive board chair Pat Schinabeck said positive changes have been a constant for the **Women's Fund**, which since 1997 has awarded \$78,700 in grants.

"We've doubled the size of our board from five to 10," Schinabeck said. "That has allowed us to hear more voices of younger and older women in the community."

Section: *region and state*

Page: 03C

Record Number: app42474468

Copyright (c) The Post-Crescent. All rights reserved. Reproduced with the permission of Gannett Co., Inc. by NewsBank, inc.