

Luncheon celebrates womanhood

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APPLETON — Fox Valley residents raised about \$100,000 Thursday for nonprofit programming like domestic violence awareness, women's health initiatives and teenage parenting programs. About 1,000 people attended the **Women's Fund** for the Fox Valley Region's seventh annual luncheon.

The luncheon is the group's "signature event" and largest fundraiser, said executive director Shauna Egeh. She expected the event to raise about \$110,000 to support the group's programming and operation costs.

More than a fundraiser, the luncheon celebrates a bond among females, she said. Women should embrace their commonalities to support each other during unique experiences like pregnancy, balancing a career and family and confronting societal expectations.

"There's really no other place in the community where you're going to get together ... and celebrate womanhood," Egeh said. "To give each other permission to be who we are and not fall victim to society's pressures is so important."

Keynote speaker Rebecca Ryan, founder of the Madison-based Next Generation Consulting, said she relished the rare opportunity to "spend some sister time" with the mostly female audience.

During her second keynote appearance in five years, Ryan weaved together personal anecdotes — like her awkwardness as a 6-foot-tall fifth-grader and her change in priorities following her father's death — in her presentation, "Tales of an Unfinished Woman."

Everyone, but women in particular, should think of their lives as unfolding stories, she said. People must track the lessons they have learned and consider who they can teach in the next chapter.

"You have an unwritten, unfinished play. ... What will you do to pay it forward?" she asked.

Ryan's speech, which echoed the luncheon's theme of Heading for the Future, was inspirational, said Joyce Fisher of Appleton. For her, humor provoked meaningful thought about how to shape lives.

Marne Keller-Krikava, a member of the **Women's Fund** board of directors and the director of strategy and business planning for J.J. Keller and Associates, said the motivational stories of keynote speakers like Ryan have drawn her to the

luncheon each year.

"When you leave, you really want to go and make a difference," she said.

Though the event is marketed toward women, the luncheon's message of camaraderie is inspirational to men as well, said Rich Redman, director of marketing for Goodwill Industries of North Central Wisconsin. Still, he said he actually appreciated being the self-proclaimed minority at the luncheon.

"It would be nice for men to hear it," he said, "but there's a bonding and commonality that's created by women coming together."

About **Women's Fund**

The **Women's Fund** of the Fox Valley Region is an Appleton-based nonprofit focused on personal growth and economic self-sufficiency for women and girls.

The fund, which began in 1994 and is a supporting organization of the Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region, has provided more than \$208,000 in grant money to about 50 nonprofit agencies in the Fox Valley.

To donate money or apply for a grant, call Executive Director Shauna Egeh at 920-830-1290 or e-mail info@womensfundfvr.org.

On the Web

The **Women's Fund** for the Fox Valley Region: www.womensfundfvr.org

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