

Since our last meeting, we've heard an inspiring story about connections formed through 100 Women Who Care- Elk Rapids Area that we'd like to share. It's especially timely as our August 29 meeting approaches with nominations due August 22.

At our May 30 meeting, Sylvia Schonauer-Kalchik presented a scholarship program being created by Antrim Women's Alliance. While her nomination was not selected for funding, it got the attention of member Nancy Baker, who has a passion for college access and a background in starting scholarship programs in Chicago and Savannah, Georgia. Following our meeting, Nancy reached out to Sylvia and together they are now building a scholarship program that goes far beyond what was initially imagined.

This "new and improved" version stresses the importance of carefully selecting and preparing students who have the aptitude and commitment to succeed, helping ensure their success through mentorships with adults in the community and ACT prep classes. Accountability is assured by tracking the scholarship recipients' progress during college and periodically meeting in person.

With Antrim Women's Alliance's assurance that student success would be measured, Nancy and other donors made generous gifts that will allow them to launch the AWA Antrim Scholars program later this year. While Antrim Women's Alliance did not receive our collective gift in May, it gained the expertise and guidance of a member who is helping to build a stronger program with greater impact.

100 Women Who Care-Elk Rapids Area provides an opportunity to learn about, and connect with, a wide variety of nonprofits whether or not we make a financial gift. As Sylvia put it, "I really appreciate the work 100WWC-ER is doing to help nonprofits with their programs. AWA is so fortunate that Nancy was in the audience that evening and reached out to me. She has provided great guidance to us and blessed Antrim County in a big way."

Nancy and Sylvia's story encourages every member to think about what she can offer in terms of helping local nonprofits better deliver their services. Your personal resources include:

- Your time and talent. Most nonprofits depend on volunteers for a variety of roles from administrative (think mailings) to delivering services (working in a food pantry or mentoring students) to communication (are you a compelling writer?) and fundraising (do you enjoy planning events?).
- Your connections. Introducing the nonprofit to other organizations or individuals who might have a shared interest in their mission and programs. Ask yourself -Who do I know that might be able to help?
- Your expertise. Offering your personal experience and background to help nonprofit management think creatively about what they do. This is what Nancy offered Antrim Women's Alliance and the result was a much more robust scholarship program.

Getting further engaged can be the most satisfying part of a member's giving circle experience. And nominating a nonprofit, whether or not it's selected, can be a powerful way to build awareness of, and support for, organizations and causes you care deeply about.