



100 WOMEN WHO CARE

of the Adirondack Foothills



Imagine: No bake sales, car washes, galas, tag sales, gift wrap vending, raffles, or letter-writing campaigns.

Just a group of committed women dedicated to the health and welfare of their communities, their checkbooks, and 60 minutes of their time. The result? Thousands of dollars for a local nonprofit to fund a specific project or program that benefits the community.

This happens four times a year thanks to 100 Women Who Care of the Adirondack Foothills. Since its inaugural meeting in January 2018, the organization has

contributed over \$325,000 to nonprofits in Fulton and Montgomery Counties.

The 100 Women Who Care concept was developed in 2006 by, Michigan resident Karen Dunigan, who initially started the effort when an organization in her community was fundraising for cribs for new mothers. She brought together 100 women whom she knew would write a check for \$100, and by the end of that very first meeting, they had \$12,800 to donate.

By the end of that effort, she realized the potential of this fundraising method. So did others. The idea spread like wildfire. Today, there are over 900 chapters of 100 Women Who Care across the globe, including one in Fulton County.

Amy Karas, one of five founders of the local chapter, learned about the program from a friend who belonged to the Albany chapter. One evening Karas was visiting with friends, Audrey Kline, Pat Beck, Marj Kline, and Holly Chamberlin, telling them about it. It didn't take long before the women concluded that they could do the same in their own community.

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involvement, the five brought together 80 women to present the simple concept: Women who join agree to write one \$100 check per quarter to a local nonprofit of the group's choosing, according to its selection process. The attendees greeted the idea with great enthusiasm, and 100 Women Who Care of the Adirondack Foothills was born.

Meetings take place in February, May, August, and November at St. John's Church in Johnstown. The group invites members to nominate local non-profit organizations in Fulton, Montgomery, and Schoharie counties, excluding political, religious, and national organizations. Members nominate an average of 12 charities per meeting. The group then draws three names, and the nominating member for each has five minutes to make a presentation about the organization followed by a five-minute question and answer session.

After the presentations, the group votes. The

organization with the most votes wins, and each woman writes a check for \$100 directly to that charity.

"The meeting takes exactly one hour," Beck said. "That is the beauty of it." Beck points out other benefits, too. The group has no officers, only a steering committee made up of the five founding members. No additional fundraising is required beyond that 60 minutes, an element that was highly appealing to members, versus the hours spent on traditional fundraisers.

The 100 Women Who Care simply acts as a facilitator to bring together those who want to support nonprofits within the community and offer them a vehicle to do that, which combined, makes a significant impact.

The group has donated to a wide variety of charitable organizations since its inception. These include nonprofits dedicated to helping families, students, animals, veterans, and the terminally ill, to name just a few.



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One caveat is that eligible charities must use the money for a specific program or project and not for operating costs. “We look at what programs are actually going to have an impact on the community,” Beck said.

Fonda, New York-based Haven of Hope was one of the first recipients of donations from 100 Women Who Care. The organization, which provides transitional housing for homeless women and children, received over \$13,000 which it planned to use for a capital project. However, the COVID-19 pandemic postponed that project. Instead, Haven of Hope used the funds to create a family center



by converting its former commercial kitchen space into a two-bedroom family suite with a kitchenette. “It’s just lovely,” said executive director Patricia Brooking. “The family has its own space and mom can take care of her family the way she wants to,” she said, noting that Haven of Hope’s additional seven bedrooms are continually full of women in need of temporary housing.

The pandemic caused the cancellation of only one meeting in May 2020, after which 100 Women Who Care switched to Zoom meetings until the pandemic’s end. “It helped all the feelings that were going on during the pandemic,” Beck said. “We were still able to gather and feel the support of others and still be able to be giving while we were isolated.”

One recipient was the Mental Health Association in Fulton and Montgomery Counties which received \$16,000 in May 2021. The organization used that money to run a behavioral health summer program

that operated three full days per week for six weeks. Students attended cultural outings to places like Fort Ticonderoga and the USS Slater in Albany, and they had recreational trips to the beach, a local zoo, and other venues.

In addition, the association used the funds for staff training for two evidence-based programs. It sent the association’s child advocacy therapist to the Girls Circle training to bring that program, which is designed to help girls develop positive self-images, high self-esteem and healthy relationships, to the Mohawk Valley. There were also funds to send staff to attend a “train the trainer” course for the Teen Mental Health First Aid program that teaches teens aged 15 to 18 how to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental health and substance use challenges in their peer group.

“These were important pieces to the overall well-being of the children that we serve in the child advocacy center,” said executive director Janine Dykeman. “The CAC works with children who have been physically or sexually abused, maltreated, and neglected. It is really



critical work being done to promote wellness and good health and recovery after some significant and traumatic events that have occurred for these children.”

Dykeman has high admiration for the five founding members of 100 Women Who Care. “They banded together and thought that this was something in the community that could make a difference, and it absolutely has,” she said. “Thousands have been

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positively impacted by the caring that these women have for their community.”

The organization not only impacts the charities it supports, but the members themselves. “What everybody is hearing is that when they come to these meetings, they’re being educated about all the nonprofits in our area,” Beck said. This allows people to take ownership in the community, she said. Another benefit is the new people members get to know. “They meet people whose lives and paths have not crossed.”

Members have found ways for those who do not have the financial resources to commit \$400 per year to participate. “We were looking for something that we could do to get younger women to get involved in the community and take ownership,” Beck said. This came in the form of having women join together in the \$100 per quarter contribution, deciding as a unit on their one vote at each meeting. For example, one group of four young women contributes \$25 each. Another way of involving those who can’t afford it is by finding business people in the community to sponsor members. “If we have somebody that comes to us and says, ‘I’d love to be a part of it, but I just can’t afford it,’ we will find out if we can find a sponsor for them,” she said.



Today, 100 Women Who Care has 180 members, with a goal of reaching 200 so that each quarter, a local nonprofit would receive a \$20,000 donation.

The organization demonstrates the power in commitment and coming together. “I think the biggest part of it is that so many people who want to give can’t afford to write a \$10,000 check or even a \$1,000 check,” Beck said. By becoming one of the 100 Women Who Care, they can help make a significant contribution to the community. “It’s a simple concept with a big impact.”

www.100womenadk.com

Since it began in January 2018, 100 Women Who Care of the Adirondack Foothills has contributed over \$325,000 to community organizations in Fulton and Montgomery Counties. The following is a list of recipients.

Gloversville Backpack Program
Haven of Hope
Ayres Memorial Animal Shelter
Oppenheim-Ephrata-St. Johnsville Schools
Backpack Program
Hamilton Fulton Montgomery Choices Program
Captain Community Human Services
Veterans’ Community Housing
NOAH Free Community Meals
Fulton County Regional SPCA
Mountain Valley Hospice
Elizabeth Cady Stanton Hometown Association
Fulton Montgomery County Mental Health Association
Gloversville School District Backpack Program
Junior Youth Program of Canajoharie
Sharon Springs Sharing is Caring
The Loft
The Berean Bean Community Coffee Shop