



WOMEN AND GIRLS
FOUNDATION

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Women and Girls Foundation Announces Launch of Multimillion-Dollar Femisphere Initiative

With Femisphere, WGF will reimagine Pittsburgh as a place that puts women at the center of economic growth and poverty reduction efforts.

Pittsburgh, PA (July 27, 2017) – Today, the Women and Girls Foundation (WGF) announced the launch of its new Femisphere initiative. With Femisphere, WGF will reimagine Pittsburgh as a place that puts women at the center of economic growth and poverty reduction efforts.

Today's announcement follows a 2016 report from WGF and Allegheny County Department of Human Service that identified obstacles preventing more moms and kids from becoming economically secure. In Pittsburgh alone, 77% of households living in poverty are single female-headed households with children. Over the next three years, WGF will invest over \$1,000,000 annually in strategic initiatives focused on breaking down these barriers so that every girl can rise and every woman can soar.

To kick off Femisphere, several programming partners will receive program and grant support from WGF. These community partners include: Community College of Allegheny County, Pathways PA, Pittsburgh Association for the Education of Young Children (PAEYC) and the Women's Law Project. In addition, WGF is working with over ninety organizations across the state who are committed coalition partners in WGF's Paid Family & Medical Leave Campaign. The Paid Family & Medical Leave Campaign strives to establish a state-level solution to provide paid leave to all workers in Pennsylvania.

Femisphere will be led by new WGF team member Rochelle Jackson. Rochelle is a champion for economic justice and former Advocate and Organizer for the Welfare Justice Project. She currently serves as a member of the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services Income Maintenance and Consumer Subcommittee of Medical Assistance Advisory Committees and the Coalition for Low-Income Pennsylvanians (CLIP). As Director of Femisphere, Rochelle will work with WGF partners to amplify existing local poverty reduction efforts and oversee the implementation and promotion of new project-related programming.

"I am so very excited to join the Women and Girls Foundation to lead Femisphere," said **Rochelle Jackson, Director of Femisphere**. "As a single mom, I have made it my life's work to put a face on and give a voice to the issues that plague families in this region. This is like a dream come true for me and I look forward to working to level the economic playing field for women in poverty and their children."

"Our vision is to transform Pittsburgh into a Femisphere – an ecosystem that provides everything women and girls need to live, work, and thrive. At a time when women's rights are under attack and basic social services are threatened, we need to commit in big bold ways to supporting women and girls. Status quo is no longer good enough," said **Heather Arnet, CEO of the Women and Girls Foundation**. "With generous support and collaboration from our partners, we will now have the resources to develop solutions that can unlock the true power of women and girls and position Pittsburgh as a national model of a Femisphere."

Funding partners include the Buhl Foundation, the Opportunity Fund, which has made a multi-year commitment to the program, and the Henry L. Hillman Foundation, which has granted \$1,000,000 to the Women and Girls Foundation to help launch Femisphere.

The next stage of Femisphere will focus on increasing women's access to:

- Educational and workforce development programs that offer transportation and child care assistance;
- Higher quality child care within neighborhoods where most low-income moms and kids live;
- More “non-traditional hour” child care to serve growing sectors of service, restaurant, and retail employees;
- Paid family and medical leave to strengthen the economic security of all families;
- Protection of women’s healthcare, workplace, and social equity rights; and,
- The training of young girls to become our next generation of elected leaders.

“Everyone can do their part to make this world more fair and equitable for women and girls. We invite everyone in the community – individuals and other organizations – to join us in this effort,” said **WGF Board Chair and Twitter VP of Inclusion and Diversity Candi Castleberry-Singleton**. “Throughout its history WGF has worked to break down barriers through targeted activism and smart public policy. The generous support from our early funding partners at the Henry L. Hillman Foundation and the Opportunity Fund is a strong recognition of that work and gives momentum to help us bring about even more change for women and girls in the future.”

About the Women and Girls Foundation:

The Women and Girls Foundation (WGF) is a non-profit organization based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The mission of WGF is to achieve equality for women and girls, now and for generations to come. In pursuit of this mission, WGF breaks down barriers so that every girl can rise and every woman can soar. Our vision is for women and girls in Pennsylvania to have equal access, opportunity, and influence in all aspects of their public and private lives. Since 2002, WGF has successfully advocated for noteworthy policies including equal pay for equal work; the banning of inmate shackling during childbirth; increased access to paid sick days and paid family leave; protections for victims of stalking, sexual harassment and assault; expanded opportunities for female athletes; and increased representation for women in the boardroom. For more information about WGF and for more about Femisphere, visit www.wgfpa.org/femisphere.

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