



WOMEN AND GIRLS
FOUNDATION

—
WILL WORK FOR EQUALITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Media Contact: Olivia Benson
412-258-2559
olivia@wgfpa.org

WGF Announces New Staff to Lead Efforts to Break Down Barriers for Women & Girls

As women fight for equality across the nation, WGF invests in local and statewide policies that champion women and families.

Pittsburgh, PA (August 15, 2017) – Today, the Women and Girls Foundation (WGF) announced the addition of several staff members to support new initiatives and ongoing efforts to improve the economic security of women and girls. New team members include: **Maryem Aslam, Olivia Benson, Carey Cummings, Amirah Hunt, and Rochelle Jackson. Tara Simmons**, who has served as WGF’s Vice President for many years has also been promoted to Chief Operating Officer. The new team will join WGF’s CEO **Heather Arnet** in leading WGF’s efforts to reimagine Pittsburgh as a Femisphere – a place that puts women and girls at the center of economic growth and poverty reduction efforts.

This news follows the recent announcement from WGF that over the next three years, the organization would invest over \$1,000,000 annually in strategic initiatives focused on breaking down barriers so that every girl can rise and every woman can soar. These efforts will include growing WGF’s award winning GirlGov program, collaborating with community partners to decrease poverty rates for single mothers through Femisphere, and leading a state campaign to make paid family leave a reality for all workers in Pennsylvania.

To lead the state campaign for Paid Family Leave, WGF has hired **Carey Cummings** to be the Statewide Director of the Paid Family Leave Campaign. Carey formerly served as Pennsylvania State Representative Dan Frankel’s (D-23) Chief of Staff. Prior to working for the state legislature, Carey was a litigation attorney for ten years. During that time, she helped form the LGBT Rights Committee of the Allegheny County Bar Association and steer the committee’s efforts on marriage equality. Carey serves as a Commissioner on the Allegheny County Human Relations Commission and on the Executive Council of Women in the Law Division of the Allegheny County Bar Association.

Rochelle Jackson, recently joined WGF to serve as Femisphere Project Director. In her role, she will lead WGF’s efforts to transform how single mothers and their families are served in our region. Rochelle formerly worked at Just Harvest, where she served as the Public Policy Advocate. Prior to that role, she was the Advocate and Organizer for the Welfare Justice Project – a Just Harvest initiative created to educate and empower those affected by the welfare system to demand changes at all levels of government.

Olivia Benson has been hired as Community Engagement Director to help guide communications and engagement efforts for WGF initiatives and advocacy programs. Prior to joining WGF, Olivia worked as Deputy Press Secretary for US Congressman Jason Altmire, a communications specialist in the Allegheny County Chief Executive Office, and led communications operations on a number of political campaigns. Olivia has also served as the Director of Youth Policy for the City of Pittsburgh, leading the city’s education, employment, and civic engagement programs for thousands of students and young adults.

Amirah Hunt, is the new GirlGov Program Manager. Amirah will oversee GirlGov, WGF's signature civic engagement program that has trained hundreds of high school girls to be the next generation of elected leaders and activists. Amirah formerly worked as the Program Manager for The Pittsburgh Promise and as a School Counselor with Pittsburgh Public Schools. Her efforts helped students work through current barriers and create a path to high school graduation and beyond.

In addition, WGF will also host a Pulse fellow to support overall GirlGov program operations. This year's WGF Pulse Fellow is **Maryem Aslam**, a recent graduate from Chatham University where she served as President of the Muslim Student Association and a participant in the Women of the World Leadership Retreat.

“Working with this group of smart, talented women to advance women and girls’ rights is a dream come true. They each have tremendous personal and professional experience and networks which will energize our work locally and increase our ability to reach out to new partners across Pennsylvania,” said CEO **Heather Arnet**. “Our current strategic plan sets out some big bold goals for our organization because the stakes are very high right now for women and girls. Our rights, our services, our healthcare, and access to family sustaining jobs and education – all of these are threatened every day. That is why it was imperative for us to recruit the brightest, creative, courageous individuals we knew who would join our fight for gender equity.”

For detailed bios and photos of the staff please go to: <http://wgfpa.org/who-we-are/staff/>

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. For more information about WGF and for more about Femisphere, GirlGov, and our Paid Family Leave Campaign visit www.wgfpa.org.

###