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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Grant awards empower regional organizations to “work for equality”

The Women and Girls Foundation awards nearly \$60,000 to nonprofit organizations working to improve women and girls’ rights in Southwest PA

PITTSBURGH- In the midst of the current economic recession which has caused even heavily endowed foundations to suspend grantmaking efforts, the Women and Girls Foundation (WGF) recently awarded \$58,000 in grants to area nonprofit agencies to support their efforts to increase women’s rights in the region.

“While the economic crisis of 2009 presented our own organization with fundraising and operational challenges,” said WGF Executive Director Heather Arnet, “our board was committed to raise enough funds to ensure that we would be able to award grants in 2009. We were inspired and heartened by the commitment our donors had in making stretch investments to support our work – and the work of our grantee agencies – to advance women’s rights.”

In August 2009, WGF released a request for proposals soliciting applications from organizations pursuing policy advocacy to advance women and girls rights. Thirty one applications from throughout the region were submitted, reviewed by the WGF grantmaking committee, and narrowed down ten finalists showcased on WGF’s website for community vote and feedback.

The community was then invited to participate in WGF’s first-ever online vote to aid in the final selection of the 2009 grantees. WGF received more than 2,500 individual online votes and at their December Board Meeting, the WGF Board of Directors voted to distribute funds to all of the Top 10 proposals.

“The grant I have received from the Women and Girls Foundation offers a wonderful opportunity to inspire young women in advocacy regarding the gender wage gap,” said grant recipient Vanessa Koch, of Carnegie Mellon University.

The following ten grant recipients will use the awarded grant funds for direct lobbying support, grassroots advocacy efforts, and community organizing initiatives focused on specific legislative or policy changes to improve women and girls rights in the Southwest PA region. A total of \$58,000 was awarded, distributed amongst the following organizations:

Vanessa Koch, Carnegie Mellon University – to engage young women in the Greater Pittsburgh area with the issue of the gender wage gap and encourage their participation in advocacy-related policy efforts.

The Washington Hospital Teen Outreach – to encourage a more positive body image for women by engaging adult women and adolescent girls in Washington County in a retail focused advocacy effort focused on the “Right sizing” of female apparel.

New Voices Pittsburgh: Women of Color for Reproductive Justice (NVP) – to redress the current conditions of non-violent female offenders housed in Allegheny County Jail and advocate for improved human rights and gender appropriate conditions in the prison.

City of Pittsburgh – to identify opportunities and/or shortfalls in City of Pittsburgh diversity recruitment and hiring practices to increase the representation of women in public safety, administrative leadership, and improve professional practices.

Coalition of PA Crime Victim Organizations (COPCVO) – to train and encourage Crime Victims Survivors Speakers Bureau Members (SSB) in legislative advocacy efforts and generate support for the passage and funding of legislation beneficial to women and girls.

Just Harvest – to advocate to the PA Department of Welfare to withdraw proposed regulatory changes to TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) Special Allowances that would limit women’s access to Special Allowance items as they try to move from welfare to economic self-sufficiency.

Mercy Behavioral Health (MBH) – to educate young middle-school women about the voice they have in their government and the difference they can make through civic participation.

The Midwife Center for Birth & Women’s Health (TMC) – to contribute to improved healthcare outcomes for women and infants in the Pittsburgh region, and beyond, by increasing low income women’s access to (and ability to use Medicaid/care) to utilize birth centers and midwifery services.

Women’s Center and Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh – to advocate for increased appropriations and improved policies to advance services and protections for victims of domestic violence.

Women’s Law Project – to work to pass a new state law mandating regular Title IX audits for federally funded high school and middle school athletics programs to ensure equitable support for female athletics.

To schedule an interview with a WGF representative or grantee, please contact Elizabeth Waickman at 412-258-2567. More information about The Women and Girls Foundation is available at www.wgfpa.org.

About Women and Girls Foundation

The Women and Girls Foundation of Southwest Pennsylvania (WGF) is an independent community-based foundation serving eleven counties in Southwest Pennsylvania. Our mission is to achieve equity for women and girls in the region.

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