

Contact:  
Marion DeForest  
206-340-1710  
[marion@wawomensfoundation.org](mailto:marion@wawomensfoundation.org)



## Washington Women's Foundation to Award \$475,000 in Large Impact Community Grants in 2009

*Foundation maintains funding and membership levels despite economic downturn*

SEATTLE—(Feb. 4, 2009)—Against the backdrop of a struggling economy and increasing community need, the [Washington Women's Foundation](http://www.wawomensfoundation.org) will award \$475,000 in large impact grants to local nonprofit organizations in 2009.

The \$475,000 designation represents the second-largest pooled fund amount in the foundation's 13-year history. Last year's record distribution of \$500,000 included a special \$25,000 allocation to honor founder and outgoing president, Colleen S. Willoughby.

In addition to combining their resources for large impact grants, foundation members will make individual grants totaling approximately \$475,000 this year to the nonprofits of their choice as part of their annual membership contribution. Washington Women's Foundation President [Carla Lewis](#) announced the organization's 2009 giving levels last night at its annual membership event at the Seattle Art Museum (SAM).

"Given this challenging economic climate, our sustained [membership](#) and funding levels for 2009 speak volumes about the commitment of our members and the staying power of our collective giving model," Lewis said. "As funding for essential services declines, the foundation's ability to provide meaningful support to community programs has never been more important." The number of nonprofits seeking grants from the Washington Women's Foundation this year has increased 59 percent over 2008 levels.

[Large impact grants](#) of up to \$100,000 each will be awarded in five giving areas: arts and culture, education, environment, health, and human services. Grantees will be selected through a rigorous review process and voted on by the entire membership of the Washington Women's Foundation. Award winners will be announced in June 2009. These major grants are among the largest in the region. Only five percent of grants awarded in the Northwest are \$100,000 or more. (*Source: "Trends in Northwest Giving," published by Philanthropy Northwest, May 2008*).

"We have a record number of members serving on our 2009 Grant Committee," said Lewis. "With strong member support and engagement, we are well-positioned to further our mission of building and strengthening community."

Last night's event at SAM featured a panel discussion with three longtime Washington Women's Foundation members who also are prominent philanthropic leaders – Connie Ballmer, founder of Partners

for Our Children; Debbi Brainerd, founder of IslandWood; and Mimi Gates, director of the Seattle Art Museum. Panelists shared their personal philanthropic journeys as well as perspectives on risk-taking, community-building and the unique role of women in addressing critical social needs.

Following the panel, SAM Curator of American Art Patti Junker provided an overview of *Edward Hopper's Women* exhibition, which attendees then viewed in the museum's galleries. The event was made possible through the generosity of presenting sponsor Laird Norton Tyee and support from The Seattle Foundation and Seattle Art Museum.

### **About the Washington Women's Foundation**

The mission of the Washington Women's Foundation is to educate and expand the number of women engaged in philanthropy, and to build and strengthen community through individual and large impact grants. The foundation's members, now almost 500 strong, have invested \$8.6 million of their own resources in nonprofit organizations across Washington State since 1996 (\$4.27 million in pooled grants; \$4.39 million in individual grants). Membership is open to any woman interested in philanthropy. For more information, visit [www.wawomensfoundation.org](http://www.wawomensfoundation.org).

####