

GOOD WORKS:

With pooled resources, women make a big impact

By [Sun Staff \(contact\)](#)

Sunday, Oct. 23, 2016 | 2 a.m.

What does Nevada Women's Philanthropy do? NWP addresses community needs in many areas of Las Vegas, such as the arts, education, environment, health, child welfare and social services. We have supported children who needed a voice, women who needed a sister-in-arms and individuals who needed a hand up. Our goal is to engage bold, new ventures in the philanthropic community that address a vital need. Through our large impact grant, we partner with these agencies, work with them to achieve their goals and create a sustainable plan beyond the NWP funding. The number of members joined or dollars contributed can never account for the lives changed.

The organization was founded by six women in November 2005. How did you all meet and why was it important to start this group? The six founders were all like-minded friends who wanted to do something for the community, but in a way that could make an impact that was far more than what they were able to achieve individually. From the beginning, they understood there was strength in numbers. Today, NWP averages 80 members per year.

How has the Everychild Foundation in Los Angeles inspired your organization? Everychild was instrumental in helping NWP form quickly. It was incredibly generous in giving guidance, letting us adopt its structure and procedures and offering us input. We recognized that, over time, we would adapt and tailor procedures to fit our community needs. However, we could not have hit the ground running like we did without Everychild's help.

How has your organization reinvented community giving? We are an all-volunteer, member-driven organization. Each member contributes \$5,000, and that money is pooled to make one large impact grant of approximately \$350,000 and one founders' grant of \$30,000 per year. We have low operating costs, with the motto of "money in, money out." Our model is simple, yet impactful. Sen. Barbara Mikulski was quoted as saying, "Each one of us can make a difference. Together we make change," and that is what NWP does; we are driven to make change. Our members are entrepreneurs, professionals, mothers, grandmothers and everything in between, but they all have one thing in common: they are passionate about Las Vegas.

Talk about some organizations NWP has helped. We partnered with Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada in funding for the Foster Care Early Intervention Program. The program began early in 2009 with funding from the Nevada Supreme Court to provide a voice for the child at his or her most vulnerable time, when the child is first taken from home and put in the child welfare system. The goal of the program is to improve the lives of children and families who enter the welfare system by improving court and agency processes, reducing the amount of time children spend in foster care, finding permanent homes for children, reducing time in court for unnecessary cases and avoiding the interruption of a child's education. Our grant of \$325,000 funded a portion of the program and an attorney for three years.

In 2013, we invested in Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth. Most children become homeless after being forced to leave their homes due to a severe family breakdown, including parental substance abuse, physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse, and neglect. More than half of youths in shelters and on the streets report that their parents told them to leave or knew they were leaving and did not care. All of these children need a safe place to stay and an opportunity to succeed. The NPHY drop-in center had reached capacity and was no longer able to meet this fragile community's needs. We invested \$350,000 to expand the center to increase the number of clients served

and the quality of services offered. The grant funds paid for facility expansion, equipment and supplies to outfit the expanded center's music, art, tutoring and recreation areas, plus salary for an additional case manager.

In May, we awarded HELP of Southern Nevada the 2016 Nevada Women's Philanthropy Impact Grant totaling \$385,000. This grant is an investment in the at-risk youth community and will provide furniture, a security system and other essential equipment for the nonprofit's new Shannon West Homeless Youth Center.

What services might the community not know about? With the help of our vice president, Cindy Ellis, we just launched a volunteer bulletin board. This resource is where the 20 NWP recipient organizations identify volunteer opportunities and in-kind wish lists so our members can help our recipients as much as they would like on an individual basis. We're hoping to expand this effort with our volunteer committee in the next few months.

What is the biggest misconception about NWP? Sometimes women think they need to be invited to join, and that couldn't be further from the truth. We are an inclusive, all-volunteer organization and we rely on all our members for their experience, innovative thinking and dedication. Our members are our everything. Any woman who is interested in joining our grant-pooled fund should contact us at president@nvwomensphilanthropy.org.

What's coming in the next five to 10 years? In 2016, we had 91 members. Our goal is 110 members, which would allow us to grant \$500,000 a year. It's a lofty goal, but a tangible one, and I'd bet on these women and this organization any day.