



THE WOMEN'S FUND
of Southern Alabama

Empowering
Women and Girls

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The Community Foundation
of South Alabama

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For good. For ever.

FIRST ANNUAL MEETING

Volume 1, Issue 2

August 2005

The Women's Fund of Southern Alabama celebrated its First Annual Meeting on January 13, 2005. Nearly two hundred men and women attended the event at the River-view Plaza Hotel beginning at noon. The theme was "Higher Steps for Women and Girls."

The Grants Advisory Committee set its 2004 initiative on a female, head of household, in pursuit of higher education. Area agencies were solicited to sponsor applications from their clients. Stephanie Hill, a twenty-one year old mother of three children, was awarded the \$500 grant through her sponsor the Mobile Teen Center. Ms. Hill is pursuing a Bachelor's degree in nursing and attends the University of South Alabama.

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Below. Pictured at the First Annual Meeting are Barbara Williams, Executive Director of the Mobile County Health Department's Teen Center, Stephanie Hill, grant recipient and Cynthia Weaver, Executive Board Member. Photo courtesy of the Mobile Register 2005 © All Rights Reserved. Reprinted with permission. Initial publication on January 13, 2005.



Below. Pictured from left, Mary Rencher, Travis Andrews, and Joseph Smith of the YWCA Daycare and After School Program decorate shoes used as table centerpieces. Photos courtesy of the Mobile Register 2005 © All Rights Reserved. Reprinted with permission. Initial publication on January 4, 2005.



Our Sisters' Closet

Our Sisters' Closet is a non-profit organization that provides quality, professional clothing free of charge to low-income, homeless and battered women to increase their employment potential and contribute to their economic independence. Individual attention is given to all clients to help the women select an appropriate interview outfit; when clients are hired, clothing appropriate for the workplace is also provided. Emphasis is placed on instilling a positive self image and on grooming and clothing care. To qualify, clients must be job ready and actively engaged in a job search. Clients are referred through social service agencies, job training programs, churches and other organizations that support Our Sisters' Closet. The mission of Our Sisters' Closet is to increase self-confidence of its clients and improve their job opportunities.

Our Sisters' Closet is stocked with clothing donated by members of the community. The Closet accepts donations of any kind of clothing. There is also a need for accessories such as belts, scarves, shoes, handbags, jewelry, undergarments, and new cosmetics. Seventy-seven pairs of shoes were donated at the Women's Fund First Annual Meeting in January, 2005. Cash gifts are used to purchase clothing where donations do not meet the need. Specifically, seventy-five percent of the clients wear size sixteen or greater; however, only twenty percent of the donations are in those sizes. On average, twenty women per month are outfitted through The Closet. Clearly, the need is great!

In addition to other services provided by Our Sisters' Closet, it operates as a networking tool. Clients, donors and community service organizations often come together to the mutual benefit of all. Workshops are also offered by Our Sisters' Closet. The topics include entry level customer service, work ethic – how to get raises and promotions, telephone etiquette, and interview and workplace appearance.

One client of Our Sisters' Closet is LaTondra Hudson. Ms. Hudson recently completed customer service and clerical training at the Clinton Johnson Economic Development Center. Ms. Hudson is currently employed in the food and beverage industry and would like to move into an office setting in any customer service capacity. In discussing her new interview outfit from The Closet, Ms. Hudson flashed a big smile and said "I feel good about this." At home, Ms. Hudson cares for three teenaged children, her two children and her niece. Further, she has provided support for her sister who recently earned a Bachelor's degree from the University of Mobile. Ms. Hudson's ability to juggle her many responsibilities and her "can-do" attitude assure that she will be successful in any job she accepts.

Terri Kearns founded Our Sisters' Closet about seven years ago. She was inspired by a television news piece on a similar group in Washington D.C. Ms. Kearns holds a Bachelor's degree in fashion retailing and worked in that industry for many years so that this project was a natural outgrowth of her years of training and experience. She approached St. Mary's Catholic Church for support and was offered the space that houses Our Sisters' Closet. The Closet has enjoyed many successes over the years. Ms. Kearns recently saw a client from about four years ago who is now happily employed and is in the process of purchasing a house.

For information about how to donate and what items are most needed, please contact Terri Kearns, 251.432.8678 or at

oursisterscloset@comcast.net



Right photo. LaTondra Hudson models her new interview suit.



Far right. Terri Kearns adjusts Ms. Hudson's suit for a perfect fit.

First Annual Meeting, continued

The theme of "Higher Steps for Women and Girls" was woven through the luncheon. It was displayed visually by bright, festive centerpieces that featured high heeled shoes, painted pink and green, the logo colors of the Women's Fund. Children from the YWCA Daycare and After-School Program created the centerpieces. Alberta Davis, Executive Director of the YWCA and Women's Fund Board Member, recruited the children to paint and decorate the centerpieces that adorned each table. The painted shoes were then placed on a pedestal of two decorated shoe boxes. The effect was quite captivating! Also, in furtherance of the theme, the Women's Fund requested that attendees bring gently used shoes to the luncheon for donation to "Our Sisters' Closet," a program that provides clothes, shoes and accessories to women who cannot afford clothes for job interviews. An enormous mound of shoes was collected at the luncheon and representatives of "Our Sister's Closet" were there to collect the booty.

Mission Statement

The Women's Fund of Southern Alabama is dedicated to improving the status and quality of life for women and girls in the eight counties of Southwest Alabama through purposeful philanthropy and the establishment of a permanent endowment.

The Community Foundation of South Alabama

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This & That

*Women's Fund logo pins are available for purchase in either sterling silver or sterling silver and gold. They make charming gifts.

*We at the Women's Fund are seeking speaking engagements. We would be delighted to speak to your club, gathering or group.

Balance on Hand

The Finance committee reports that contributions to the Fund total \$21,592.80 as of June 22, 2005. We have come a long way, and we have a long way to go! A spending policy was implemented by the Executive Board to assure that all gifts will be invested and not spent. This creates a permanent endowment that will keep giving long after we are gone.

Host a House Party

House parties are informal gatherings where guests are educated about the Women's Fund and are encouraged to participate in any way they can. The host or hostess invites family, friends and associates who may be interested in the mission of the Women's Fund to a luncheon or an after-five get together. The Women's Fund provides logistical support, information and will assist in educating your guests about the Fund. It is a grass roots approach to spreading information about the Women's Fund. Please consider hosting a house party.

Grant Recipient Stephanie Hill

Five months after the 2005 Annual Luncheon we caught up with Stephanie Hill. As one would expect for this busy mother of three, she has not slowed down! Ms. Hill who had just completed the Spring semester at the University of South Alabama reported grades of two A's and one B! Ms. Hill, a single mother, attended school full time in the Spring, worked a part-time job and raised her three sons. Ms. Hill is taking the summer off from school to work full-time.

Ms. Hill is a junior at South Alabama and used the \$500 grant to defray application fees and associated expenses to apply for admission to nursing programs in the area. Applicants must have completed sixty-four credit hours to apply to nursing programs. Ms. Hill applied to those programs at Bishop State Junior College, Faulkner State Junior College and the University of Mobile. Letters of acceptance are normally mailed in July.

In a resolute and gentle manner, Ms. Hill stated, "I am determined to be a nurse. I've faced so many obstacles and I believe I can do this." She added that it was a blessing to be awarded the Women's Fund grant, both from the perspective of financial assistance and the perspective of community affirmation and support.

Stephanie Hill is pictured with sons, from left, Carlos (3years old), and twins DeMyron and DeVonte (four years old).



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*Give to Empower
Women and Girls*

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