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## **Information, inspiration: Fund for Women and Girls kicks off in Jefferson County**

By Jennifer Jackson  
Peninsula Daily News

PORT TOWNSEND -- When Debbi Steele came up with an idea for a way to make the lives of women and girls in her county better, she didn't envision the response she would get from her friends and neighbors.

On Monday night, Steele stood and thanked the people who helped make it possible -- 100 women who attended a kickoff event at the Northwest Maritime Center to raise money for the Jefferson County Community Foundation's newest component, the Fund for Women and Girls.

"Who's going to help us make this dream a reality?" Steele asked the women assembled. "Every single one of you."

Steele is a board member of the community foundation, a nonprofit organization that oversees 10 charitable funds that benefit Jefferson County residents.

The Fund for Women and Children is not only the foundation's first "field of interest" fund, meaning it serves a specific demographic, but also the first, other than the original endowment drive, to have its own kickoff event, said Kris Mayer, the foundation's philanthropic consultant.

The result: more than \$30,000 in donations, most from first-time donors.

"Probably 90 percent of the people in the room were new to the foundation," Mayer said. "Donations ranged from \$2,000 to \$10 cash in an envelope."

### **Limited to women**

The guest list was intentionally limited to women, Mayer said, many of whom wrote checks for \$250.

An incentive to give generously: the advice from keynote speaker Barbara Stanny, who writes books and gives seminars on financial empowerment for women.

Stanny, who lives in Port Townsend, spoke on the power of philanthropy and how to use it to leave a lasting legacy in the community.

"More women give than men, but give in smaller amounts to twice as many organizations," Stanny said. "This is not powerful philanthropy."

Women often suffer from "bag lady syndrome," Stanny said, meaning they fear they'll outlive their money and end up living on the street.

Women also tend to have "bake sale" mentality, she said, thinking in terms of raising a few hundred dollars.

To put her "give big" advice into practice, Stanny announced that she would match donations to the Fund for Women and Girls up to \$10,000.

That challenge was met Monday night, Mayer said.

"We have raised nearly \$31,000, counting pledges," Mayer said. "I was stunned that so many people gave."

### **A consensus is drawn**

Each table also was given \$10,000 in play money and asked to allocate it to two areas out of six to focus on the first year.

The consensus: educational and training for school-age girls and economic opportunities for women of all ages.

"We are looking for changes that are sustainable and systemic, meaning they get to the root of the problem," said Anne Schneider, a member of the fund's steering committee.

The first donation to the Fund for Women and Girls was a matching grant from steering committee member Carol McGough and Marilyn Penitsch, Mayer said.

Others donated products and services to the kickoff event, which was sponsored by local businesses.

The next step: to define how the areas of focus will be addressed, then put out a request for proposals, which will probably happen next fall, Mayer said.

Guests also responded to a request for volunteers, offering to help with events, fundraising, education and outreach, as well as on the grant advisory committee.

"I was overwhelmed when I opened the envelopes that so many people wanted to help," Mayer said.

"Everybody wants to roll up their sleeves and go to work."

Jefferson County Community Foundation is a tax-exempt, nonprofit philanthropic organization with the goal of building endowed funds for the charitable benefit of county residents.

Contributions to the Fund for Women and Girls can be sent to JCCF, P.O. Box 1955, Port Townsend, WA 98368.

For more information, go to [www.jccfgives.org](http://www.jccfgives.org) and click on "Women and Girls Fund," or phone Kris Mayer, 360-379-3667.

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