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**Girls Award \$5,000 in Social Change Grants**

Portland – The [Maine Women's Fund](#) teamed up with [Bangor Savings Bank Foundation](#) to award \$5000 in social change grants to five girls' programs promoting lasting social change in Maine.

"These five grants are unique because the decisions were made by a group of Maine highschool aged girls about programs designed to support girls," said Sonya Tomlinson, Grant Manager, Maine Women's Fund. "Normally, the grant proposals are reviewed by the public at large. This initiative put the decision making purely in the hands of 30 girls who, in the process, came away from a day of training with a solid understanding of the elements of successful grantmaking."

On October 15, the participants of the program came together for a workshop to experience something unique. The girls were paired up with a dozen members of the Maine Women's Fund community and staff who acted as facilitators. The girls reviewed seventeen grant proposals, practiced advocacy and consensus building, and created their own definitions of philanthropy. Ultimately, the girls decided to give away \$5,000 to the following projects that they felt had the most merit:

**Youth Alternatives Ingraham (South Portland)**

The Whole Health Star program, developed through the Young Parent Program (YPP), offers housing, parenting, education and case management for six homeless, pregnant or parenting young adults up to the age of 22 and their children. With this grant, the Whole Health Star program will expose these homeless youth to recreational and healthy living experiences that will help them build life-long skills and support their development as caring and contributing members of their family and community. Activities include sewing, cooking, exercising and getting involved in their community.

**Hardy Girls Healthy Women (Waterville)**

The Hardy Girls Healthy Women (HGHW) Girls Advisory Board (GAB) is a group of young women in grades 9-12 that work with the board of directors, executive director and programs director of HGHW to plan events; ensure HGHW programs address what girls need and want; and work on changing the world so that girls have a more positive experience as they mature. GAB provides leadership opportunities; exposure to social action projects, and an awareness of the challenges girls face today. With this grant, HGHW will send 10 GAB members to a 2-day leadership retreat to learn, develop and broaden skills that will be used to engage hundreds of girls and dozens of adult service providers in genuine youth-adult partnerships for social activism.

### **A Company of Girls (Portland)**

A Company of Girls is an afterschool theater arts program for girls ages 8-18 in the Greater Portland area. Each year they produce powerful community theater targeted at creating awareness of critical issues that affect girls worldwide. They use theater as a tool to develop teamwork, confidence and a sense of personal responsibility in each participant. Girls are involved in all levels of production, from behind the scenes technical work to performing in their own productions. Through theater, A Company of Girls focuses on raising awareness and about critical issues in our culture.

### **Safe Voices (Auburn)**

*Crossing the Lines, Avoiding the Dangers of Teen Dating Violence* is a project directed toward equipping young people, girls especially, with the skills needed to identify and escape the dangers associated with teen dating violence. The project will involve an interactive reading of a novel that illustrates the realities of teen dating violence, followed by a student-directed project further enhancing the student's engagement with the relevant issue. The project will be available to high-school students, grades 9-12, in the classroom and through school-based girls' book clubs.

### **South Sudan Nuer Community Development Organization (Portland)**

In south Sudan girls are not teachers, and in general, girls are not even students. Here in America, especially in Maine, the girls of the Nuer tribe are being educated for future roles in the labor market, in society and in the tribal structure. This grant will provide Nyawal Lia (12th grade) and her assistant Nyagoa Rambang Chuol (7th grade) with the tools they need to teach 20-30 young children, ages four through ten, the Naath-Nuer language, a language that has no proper dictionary or textbooks. Because the students were born in the US, they have little to no understanding of their language, village life, lineage, history, or responsibilities as young Nuer-Americans. In addition to teaching the Nuer people of Portland, the South Sudan Nuer Community Development Organization will publish a comprehensive children's primer on the Nuer Language and Culture for the 150 Nuer people of Portland and the children of the Nuer tribe worldwide, of which there are 9,000 in Nebraska alone.

### **About the Maine Women's Fund**

The Maine Women's Fund is a public foundation for women and girls in Maine. Our work enables women and girls to use their vision, voice, and resources to create lasting change for everyone. Through our grantmaking, we fund programs that build economic security for women and girls, and through them, our broader community. In our grantmaking, we focus on four areas: education, public policy, entrepreneurship & better jobs, and financial literacy & asset building.

### **About the Bangor Savings Bank Foundation**

Philanthropy is a prominent aspect of Bangor Savings Bank's Community Investment efforts, and the most prominent centerpiece of our giving is the continuing work and contributions of The Bangor Savings Bank Foundation. The Foundation was created in 1997 to help fulfill the commitment to improving community life in Maine. Today, the Bank has chosen to improve the impact and coordination of its giving by channeling all major charitable contributions from the Bank through the Foundation's grant-making process.

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