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**NEWS RELEASE**  
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## **New Initiative Encourages Women to Give Collectively**

**Alpena, Mich.** - With the power of women's philanthropy growing stronger, the influence of charitable-minded women is being noticed nationally and worldwide. That influence has helped create a new initiative for women in northeast Michigan.

The Community Foundation for Northeast Michigan (CFNEM) has introduced the Northeast Michigan Women's Giving Circle Fund (WGC), which will award grants each year to programs addressing issues important to the women of CFNEM's four-county service area: Alcona, Alpena, Montmorency, and Presque Isle.

While everyone is welcome to be a member, the WGC is geared toward inspiring philanthropy in women and creating opportunities for them to make a lasting impact on their communities for generations to come. In fact, any donor who gives a cumulative total of \$1,000 to the WGC Fund by June 1, 2009 will be a Founding Member of the Northeast Michigan Women's Giving Circle.

"This is an amazing initiative, and to have the chance to be on the ground floor of it is a great opportunity," said Christine Bruske-Hitch, Program Associate. Hitch and Julie Wiesen, Program Director, have been working to bring the WGC to fruition for about two years.

"The WGC is giving women in our area a way to let their voices be heard about what matters most in our communities. It appeals to all generations as a way to leave a legacy and bring out the philanthropic spirit we know already exists in women," said Hitch.

A donor's first gift to the WGC Fund makes them a permanent member. Giving levels are based on cumulative totals, so members can set their own goals. The level of support is completely their choice:

- Diamond level - \$10,000 or more
- Platinum level - \$5,000 to \$9,999
- Sterling level - \$10 to \$4,999

"We're excited, not only about inspiring women to pool their resources, but also about the idea of inspiring philanthropy among women as a community," said Wiesen.

Groups of friends who meet socially or coworkers at businesses are encouraged to form their own giving circles to contribute collectively to the WGC Fund. Each group will be recognized when their cumulative totals reach \$500.

"This fund is unlike any other at the Community Foundation," said Wiesen. "Members of the Women's Giving Circle will be the ones who actually determine where the grant money goes. They will be the committee. Judging from the response so far, by the time of our first grant cycle in July of 2008, we could have nearly \$1,000 to give back to the community."

Each year, five grant committee members will be chosen at random from donors to the WGC Fund who have indicated an interest in being involved in the grantmaking process.

"Collectively, we can do so much more than most of us could ever do on our own," said Hitch. "Because this is an endowed fund, it will be here supporting our communities forever."

For more information about the Northeast Michigan Women's Giving Circle, you can contact the CFNEM office at 877-354-6884, or visit [www.cfnem.org](http://www.cfnem.org) and look for WGC.

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