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Impact 100 Awards Two Grants of \$141,000 to Area Nonprofits

Never underestimate the power of a woman, and surely not the power of 282 women who share a common goal. These are the members of Impact100 Garden State who in five years have raised and distributed \$1,051,000 in grants to nonprofit organizations in northern New Jersey.

The highlight of the year for Impact100 members is the Annual Awards Meeting that took place on November 8 at the Olde Mill Inn in Bernardsville. Membership voted for two organizations that will each receive grants of \$141,000. They were selected from a field of over 60 applicants, which was narrowed down to six finalists. These finalists presented the projects to the membership.

Excitement filled the room. Members celebrated the joy of transformative giving and the culmination of their year-long effort to pinpoint organizations in need. "There's nothing better than going on-site to visit with the nonprofits to see and feel the passion they have for the work they do in their communities," said Beth Cozza, Bernardsville, who served on a Grants Committee.

Suecarol Green-Buckner, Morristown, found out about Impact100 by assisting at the Food Pantry in Morristown. "I see the impact that grant money has on my local community every time I volunteer." And Leslie Shaw, a guest of Carrie Kitze, Warren, described herself as a huge fan of Impact100. "The transformational changes that the grants make cannot be promoted enough."

The enormity of need and the limitation of funding was not overlooked by members of the Impact Board. Christine DiCesare, Harding, Chair of Nonprofit Outreach, regretted that four

of the six finalists would not receive a grant. “My hope is that all will come back next year and apply.” Her sentiments were echoed by Betty Hutcheon, Bridgewater, co-chair of a Grants Committee, and Barbara Mackenzie, Morristown, who has also served on the Grants Committee.

In her welcome address, President Merle Johnson, Morristown, reminded the audience that membership (and revenue) has doubled since Impact100 was established in 2012. “Collectively, we have impacted the lives of hundreds of men, women and children over the past four years...and tonight we are about to impact more!”

After thanking various committees for their perseverance and hard work, Johnson gave the floor to the six finalists. A spokesperson for each organization described its mission and the core population it intends to serve. Each representative explained how a grant of \$141, 000 could be used to improve-- and indeed transform--their mission. Their presentations were followed by the recipients of last year’s grants who described how their funds had been put to use. It was an enormously gratifying moment, one that engulfed the audience with renewed determination to do even more in the future.

At last the time of reckoning arrived. Ballots were collected, votes tallied, and the winners were announced. The room erupted with tears and cheers as Oasis—A Haven for Women and Children and Project Self Sufficiency of Sussex County were declared recipients of the two grants.

Jennifer Brady, Executive Director of Oasis, said of each of the women helped by her organization: “She comes because she believes, and she knows that we believe in her. We turn no woman away.” Oasis serves illiterate women in Paterson by providing one-on-one tutoring, child care, and access to food pantries. With basic skills in hand, the women can ultimately earn a High School Equivalency diploma and work their way out of poverty.

Deborah Berry-Toon, Executive Director of Project Self Sufficiency (PSS), likens her organization to the ubiquitous pop-up shops that provide everything from medical care to food. The PSS version of a pop-up will provide mobile service for job training, education, legal assistance, and other social services. She explained that the grant will be used for a van to “take our services on the road” to pockets of extreme poverty in northwestern New Jersey. “Thank you for believing in PSS. I look forward to coming back next year to tell you about our transformation – this time in our big, big van!”

Impact 100 Garden State follows a model for collective women’s giving now used by more than 40 independent Impact 100 organizations around the world. Each member contributes \$1,000 toward membership and the entire amount of each woman’s donation funds grants for nonprofit programs that will transform their local communities.

Impact 100 Garden State is a Special Project Fund of the Community Foundation of New Jersey (<http://cfnj.org>), which supports charitable giving focused on making NJ communities stronger. The 2017 Annual Awards Meeting was sponsored by BNY Mellon, Wealth Management (www.bnymellonwealth.com).

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