



**Washington Area  
Women's Foundation**

# Stepping Stones 2005





Washington Area Women's Foundation was founded in 1998 with a mission to foster a powerful wave of philanthropy to improve the lives of all women and girls through:

- Donor education and engagement;
- Grantmaking and leadership development; and
- Public awareness programs and research.

Through fostering this powerful wave of philanthropy and focusing on the power of giving together, we believe that every woman and every girl can have the tools she needs to reach her full potential.

**Washington Area Women's Foundation**  
1411 K Street, NW Suite 800  
Washington, DC 20005  
202-347-7737

# Stepping Stones

*is a multi-year, regional initiative created by Washington Area Women's Foundation in 2004, with a goal of building the long-term financial independence and economic security of low-income women-headed families.*

Washington Area Women's Foundation created the Stepping Stones initiative in response to findings from our 2003 report *A Portrait of Women & Girls in the Washington Metropolitan Area* that low-income, women-headed families (single mothers and their children) are overwhelmingly the most economically vulnerable population in the region. The report also underscored four key areas that improve the prospect of these families breaking out of a cycle of poverty: (1) financial education and wealth creation opportunities, (2) pathways to self-sufficient jobs and business ownership, (3) affordable child care and early education options, and (4) health and safety.

In 2005, Stepping Stones expanded in many ways. First, the project broadened its reach into the Washington Area community and engaged additional community leaders from a wide range of sectors. Second, Stepping Stones highlights of the year include:

- ❖ Raised the voice and visibility of women;
- ❖ Expanded gender awareness among nonprofits;
- ❖ Launched a financial education and wealth creation fund;
- ❖ Implemented a sectoral workforce development effort;
- ❖ Launched a coordinated baseline and outcomes agenda with grantee partners, and
- ❖ Three-fold increase in grants to nonprofit organizations.

Over the past year, Stepping Stones has yielded important lessons that continue to influence The Women's Foundation and the community. This report chronicles some of the lessons learned from the first year of this multi-faceted initiative. These lessons will guide us as we blaze the trail for the next phase of the project. Phase I (2005-2008) includes a focus on the first three issue areas outlined above. Health and Safety is a lens for our work during Phase I; however, focused work will be implemented in Phase II.

# Stepping Stones Background and History

Early 2004 through 2005 was spent designing the strategy and raising funds for Stepping Stones. Over \$5 million has been committed from women philanthropists, family foundations, national foundations, financial services corporations and the public sector. With a 10-year vision, Phase I of Stepping Stones (2005-2008) specifically targets women-headed families with annual incomes of \$15,000 to \$35,000, a working population still struggling to make it given the high cost of living in our region.<sup>1</sup> There is a priority on reaching women in Wards 7 and 8 of the District of Columbia and in Prince George's County, MD as the highest concentration of the target population resides in these areas.

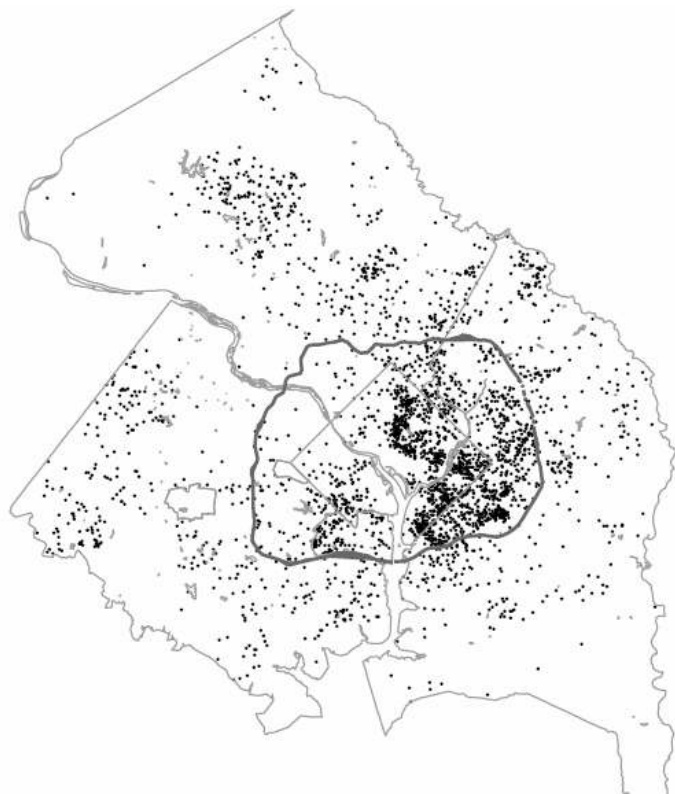
---

## Target Population: Distribution within the Washington Region

- ◆ 37% live in Prince George's County
- ◆ 28% live in D.C
- ◆ 16% live in Montgomery County
- ◆ 13% live in Fairfax County
- ◆ 3% live in Alexandria
- ◆ 3% live in Arlington County

Washington, D.C. Region by  
Census Tract

1 Dot = 100 Women with Annual  
Income \$15,000-\$35,000 (2000 Census)



<sup>1</sup> The region includes the District of Columbia; Alexandria, Arlington, and Fairfax Counties in Virginia; and Prince George's and Montgomery Counties in Maryland.

Stepping Stones has several broad objectives, is intended to bring a gender lens<sup>2</sup> to our community investments, and is designed to influence the attitudes, behaviors, policies, and practices of a variety of key stakeholders. Its objectives are:

- ❖ Create concrete, economic improvement for low-income women-headed families;
- ❖ Raise and strategically invest financial resources in best and promising practices to assist these families;
- ❖ Increase public awareness of issues and solutions;
- ❖ Build a network of and increase effectiveness among nonprofit organizations and community-anchor institutions working to advance these families; and
- ❖ Change the public and philanthropic climate by shifting perceptions, practices, and policies and by increasing awareness of the realities facing these families.

The Stepping Stones objectives will be achieved via three strategies:

- ❖ Grantmaking and Technical Assistance;
- ❖ Community Education; and
- ❖ Advocacy and Leadership Development.

---

<sup>2</sup>The term *gender lens* refers to recognizing and responding to the different realities, expectations and circumstances facing women.

# Lessons Learned

## Stepping Stones and the Nonprofit Community

**Stepping Stones is encouraging nonprofit organizations in the Washington Metropolitan Area to consider gender issues and to make new connections with organizations doing similar work.** Stepping Stones was officially launched with the release of the first RFP for the Financial Education and Wealth Creation Fund (FEWC) in December 2004. The first step in that grantmaking cycle and all subsequent cycles has been community information sessions to inform community leaders and educate nonprofits, not just about funding opportunities, but also about The Women’s Foundation, Stepping Stones, the target population, and the importance of a gender lens. The linkages made between community insights and learnings and the Stepping Stones goals have helped strengthen the grantmaking process.

Several lessons emerged from the initial grant cycle. Two of the most significant were that many organizations were unfamiliar with the term “gender lens” and that organizations’ networks with other nonprofits doing similar work across the region were limited. As a result, in the two subsequent FEWC and Jobs Fund cycles that followed in 2005, we added a definition of “gender lens” to our proposal guidelines and made clear that the Initiative is not merely seeking to provide grants, but about forging partnerships. In addition, in the third FEWC cycle and the second Jobs cycle, we moved to a Letter of Inquiry (LOI) process. All applicants selected from the LOI process to submit full proposals were invited to mandatory group meetings to learn about each others’ work and the next steps in the grantmaking process. Though this was an unconventional strategy, it became a vehicle for new ideas and was very well received. One applicant commented:

*“Thanks for inviting Goodwill of Greater Washington to be a part of your meeting for potential grantees today. It is refreshing to have such a well-thought-out, collaborative proposal process. Not only did it help to clarify [The Women’s Foundation’s] vision for the Jobs Fund and answer questions about the proposal process, it was a good forum for those of us in the field to hear about each other’s work and spark discussions that otherwise wouldn’t happen.”*

– Stephanie Martin, Goodwill of Greater Washington

**Stepping Stones grantee partners are bringing a gender lens to their work, including several organizations that had previously never had a specific focus on gender.** The Women’s Foundation is leveraging its investments to influence long-standing anchor organizations in the community to think about gender in developing their programs. For example, though **Marshall Heights Community Development Organization** had been providing financial education

services to families in Ward 7 for 26 years, prior to the organization's relationship with The Women's Foundation, the Executive Director indicated that they had never before thought consciously about gender even though most of their clients are women. Recognizing the realities that low-income women-headed families face and the learning environments in which they thrive, **Marshall Heights** is now working with more than 100 women to provide financial education, credit repair, debt reduction, savings and homeownership counseling. In addition, **Marshall Heights** is providing a network of support mechanisms for the women to learn, lead, and share their achievements with one another through "CASH Clubs." Similarly, **Goodwill of Greater Washington** has over a 60-year track record of providing job training to disadvantaged populations in the region; however, they had never before developed a program specifically tailored to women. They had developed a co-educational pre-apprenticeship construction training program in D.C. and were influenced by involvement with and support from The Women's Foundation to create a new pre-apprenticeship program geared specifically for women in Prince George's County. Stepping Stones is supporting the **Greater Washington Board of Trade's** work to develop a strategic plan for a regional healthcare workforce initiative in realizing that low-income, single mothers are an important target group to consider in this effort.

**Stepping Stones grantee partners are beginning to increase their capacity around program learning and evaluation.** As the Stepping Stones initiative began, we discovered that the level of knowledge and experience with program evaluation among grantee partners was mixed. We have contracted with Innovation Network (Innonet) to serve as our evaluator for the overall work of Stepping Stones. In addition, as one component of our technical assistance, we worked with Innonet to develop a two-day evaluation training for grantee partners. As a result of this training and additional follow-up technical assistance provided by Innonet, each of our 19 grantee partners now has an individual learning and evaluation plan for the program The Women's Foundation is funding. The evaluation reporting has been consolidated with grant reporting in order to increase efficiency and to minimize the burden on grantee partners.

Several grantee partners have reflected that participation in the Stepping Stones evaluation training has influenced how they think about their overall program planning. For example, the **Urban Alliance Foundation** is utilizing knowledge gained about logic models and evaluation plans to develop outcomes for their programs beyond those supported by The Women's Foundation.

**Stepping Stones grantee partners are more networked with one another than before and these networks now extend across the region.** Grantee partners have expressed a strong desire to convene and network with other nonprofit organizations administering similar programs and serving similar populations. The Stepping Stones issue areas and target population naturally lend themselves to these types of opportunities. We held a convening of all Stepping Stones grantee partners in July 2005 and a specific request from this meeting was the creation of a listserv to provide a forum for communication and information exchange. The listserv is up and running and has resulted in new connections among grantee partners. For example, the **Urban Alliance Foundation** was able to place several of its students in new internship slots at

**Marshall Heights Community Development Organization and Goodwill of Greater Washington** as a direct result of a request sent out on the listserv. Grantee partners were convened again in November and December 2005 for evaluation training. Another grantee partner convening was held in March 2006 and focused on refinement of Stepping Stones objectives, as well as on identification of policy advocacy targets.

**Stepping Stones has facilitated new relationships among nonprofit organizations working on microenterprise and business ownership that did not previously exist.** Though Jobs and Business Ownership was initially envisioned as one issue area, we determined that the two areas merited different strategies. Microenterprise and business ownership programs in our region are at an earlier stage in development than job training programs. In addition, microenterprise and business ownership is likely a promising strategy for a much smaller subset of entrepreneurs within the target population. Much of 2005 was focused on research and planning for our Microenterprise and Business Ownership work. We convened two strategy meetings and conducted additional telephone interviews with 25 issue-area experts and advisors to help inform the Microenterprise and Business Ownership objective and structure. One meeting brought together national policy experts and one meeting brought together nonprofit practitioners with local expertise. As a direct recommendation from these meetings, our next step will be to conduct focus groups on microenterprise and business ownership with women in the target population. In addition, we have funded a Strategic Opportunity and Partnership grantee partner, CFED, to examine microenterprise support services in the region.

**Similarly, we envision that Stepping Stones will work to help connect key local and national players in the field of Child Care and Early Education.** We have developed a Child Care and Early Education work plan for the first half of 2006 that will involve conducting an assessment of the regional landscape both in respect to possible system change and policy work, as well as the strengths and interests of both established, and more grassroots emerging organizations focused on child care, early education, and school readiness. We have hired two consultants to work with us to carry out this work. In addition, Joan Lombardi, who served as the first Associate Commissioner of the Child Care Bureau in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, has agreed to serve as an advisor to The Women's Foundation on our Child Care and Early Education work. The result of our collective work during the first half of 2006 will be a comprehensive review and plan for moving our Stepping Stones child care and early education work forward and will culminate in a strategy meeting to be held in late spring/early summer 2006.

# Stepping Stones and Relationships with Key Stakeholders

**Stepping Stones is poised to influence the lives of women in the target population as well as to influence the systems and services that affect them.** We have identified and funded Grantee Partners to do targeted work with low-income, women-headed families in D.C., Maryland, and Virginia. Based on demographic data from the **Urban Institute**, our research partner, we know that the highest concentrations of our target population reside in Wards 7 and 8 in D.C. and in Prince George's County, MD. Therefore, we have placed a priority on grantmaking to organizations providing services in these areas within the region. In 2006, our grantee partners project to increase the collective assets of women in the target population by \$10 million and work with close to 300 women and families to build pathways to jobs that have proven growth potential in health care, protective services, and non-traditional occupations.

**The philanthropic sector has begun to focus on women and girls in the Washington Metropolitan area in a much more targeted way.** Through their engagement in Stepping Stones, individual women Investors have committed more resources to a single initiative than they ever had done previously. National foundations have made significant investments in the lives of women in the Washington Metropolitan Area in an unprecedented and more targeted way. Corporate foundations have made groundbreaking investments with a gender lens, which has never been done in our region. Our program officer at the Fannie Mae Foundation recently commented that she now asks about gender and the number of women served by programs as part of her grant review process, which is something she had never done before prior to her engagement with Stepping Stones.

Stepping Stones Investors were convened twice in 2005. In February, we held a two-day retreat focused on development of our grantmaking funds; refining goals, outcomes, and strategies; and identifying additional resources and points of leverage. In May, we hosted a roundtable event on Capitol Hill to provide an update on Stepping Stones accomplishments and strategic next steps.

Also we have been working to influence the larger philanthropic sector beyond the Stepping Stones Investors. The Women's Foundation's leadership serves on the Boards of the Women's Funding Network and Women & Philanthropy and we are working to influence the work of women's funds and women donors across the country by creating what we envision being a replicable model.

In addition, we are extending our influence to philanthropic institutions within our region. In November, in conjunction with the Washington Regional Association of Grantmakers, we helped to organize a briefing on the importance of financial education and management for East of the River communities, featuring three of our grantee partners and highlighting gender as an issue.

**Stepping Stones is influencing policymakers both through the work of Grantee Partners and The Women's Foundation staff and board.** In 2005, we funded three organizations (**D.C. Employment Justice Center, CASA of Maryland, and Wider Opportunities for Women**) to complete advocacy work on behalf of the Stepping Stones target population in relation to jobs and workforce development. We have met with D.C. City Administrator Robert Bobb and his staff to enlist their support for Stepping Stones key issue areas and in the enhancement of the D.C. Women's Commission. We also initiated one-on-one meetings about Stepping Stones with Congressional offices, including Representative Tom Davis, Senator Sam Brownback, Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison, Representative Eleanor Holmes Norton, and Senator Barbara Mikulski. In addition, due to the high concentration of our target population residing in Prince George's County, we have been working closely with the County and have influenced them to establish a new Women's Advisory Group (WAG). The WAG will work with us to identify potential Grantee Partners and assist us in leveraging the funding our Board has allocated specifically for the capacity building of nonprofits in Prince George's County. Finally, Senator Mary Landrieu serves as co-chair of Stepping Stones and is well-positioned to inform Members of Congress about the needs and strengths of women in the target population.

**Stepping Stones is working to influence researchers to begin to approach their work with a gender lens.** We have engaged the **Urban Institute** as our research partner to gain a deeper understanding of our target population's demographics and to maintain current data that will assist us in developing our strategies. We have urged the **Urban Institute** staff with whom we work to consider gender in their analyses and they have, in turn, helped us to identify new research that includes gender analyses. In addition to our work with the **Urban Institute**, we are influencing several of our other Strategic Opportunity and Partnership Fund Grantee Partners (**CFED, Southern Institute on Children and Families, Greater Washington Board of Trade**) to include gender analysis in their research, where none existed before.

**Stepping Stones is influencing targeted community leaders through our community education events.** Throughout the year we made presentations about Stepping Stones before a variety of audiences and conducted information sessions about Stepping Stones for community organizations and the general public. In July 2005, we held a strategy meeting, which brought together volunteers, donors, grantee partners, employers, government representatives, and community organizations to kick off the development of the Stepping Stones community engagement model. In October, we provided an update on the progress of Stepping Stones and introduced our grantee partners to more than 1,000 community leaders at our 2005 Annual Leadership Luncheon and also sponsored a program highlighting key issue areas and personal experiences and successes of low-income women in gaining financial independence. About the Leadership Luncheon, a Grantee Partner commented:

*“ . . . we were reenergized, moved and particularly enormously pleased at the thoughtfulness and opportunities inspired. All of your speakers were poignant and delivered the same clear message. . . CPDC is immensely pleased to be part of [The Women’s Foundation’s] efforts this year and look forward to working with each of you closely to begin creating significant and meaningful economic Stepping Stones for women in our region that will ultimately make for a better region for all of us. ”*

-Al Browne, Community Preservation and Development Corporation

## Stepping Stones as a Powerful Leverage for Investments in Women

Since planning for the Stepping Stones initiative began in 2003, we have leveraged the initial **\$1 million commitment from the Fannie Mae Foundation to secure a diverse portfolio of investments totaling over \$6 million.** Stepping Stones currently receives financial support from individual donors, national foundations, corporate foundations, family foundations, and the federal government. The Honorary Co-Chairs of Stepping Stones are Stacey D. Stewart, Julie Jensen, and Senator Mary Landrieu of Louisiana. Stepping Stones Investors include:

- ◆ Fannie Mae Foundation
- ◆ Julie Jensen
- ◆ D.C. Appropriations
- ◆ Anne E. Casey Foundation
- ◆ Citigroup Foundation
- ◆ Rockefeller Foundation
- ◆ Ford Foundation
- ◆ Rocksprings Foundation
- ◆ Kimsey Foundation
- ◆ W. K. Kellogg Foundation
- ◆ Lynne Horning
- ◆ Jan Brandt
- ◆ Paula Edwards
- ◆ Capital One

**During calendar year 2005, The Women’s Foundation made a total of \$605,000 in Stepping Stones grants to nonprofit organizations. Our Grantee Partners have been able to leverage our connections and investments to attract new funding for their programs from other sources.** Some examples are:

- ◆ **The Urban Alliance Foundation** was able to receive a commitment of \$20,000 from the Rocksprings Foundation through a connection facilitated by The Women’s Foundation. This is in addition to the \$25,000 Stepping Stones grant provided to the **Urban Alliance Foundation** by The Women’s Foundation.

- ❖ **The Southern Institute on Children and Families** was able to leverage The Women's Foundation's \$10,000 Stepping Stones grant and received an additional \$35,000 grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation.
- ❖ The Women's Foundation was the first funder of **Capital Area Asset Building's (CAAB)** work coordinating the D.C. Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Campaign. Following our \$15,000 Stepping Stones investment, **CAAB** was able to attract funding from Bank of America and PNC Bank.
- ❖ **YWCA National Capital Area** was able to leverage the \$40,000 Stepping Stones grant for Washington Area Women in the Trades (WAWIT) program to attract funding from the Fannie Mae Foundation. We are continuing to work with **YWCA National Capital Area** to further leverage our investment to obtain additional support for the program from new funders.

**The Women's Foundation has also been able to leverage significant non-financial support from Stepping Stones Investors.** Representatives of three major Investors serve on a Stepping Stones working group that initially met weekly with Foundation staff to plan and launch the Initiative. The working group continues to meet on a regular basis and serves in an on-going advisory capacity to staff. In addition, several representatives of Investor organizations have served on grant review committees reviewing proposals and conducting site visits to prospective grantee partner organizations. Finally, Investors and their representatives with substantive issue area expertise around microenterprise and business ownership, and financial education and wealth creation have participated in multiple strategy meetings toward the development of Stepping Stones objectives.

## Stepping Stones as a Catalyst for The Women's Foundation's Growth

**The Women's Foundation has developed a new model of community investments.** Prior to launching Stepping Stones, the Foundation's signature program was the Leadership Awards, a volunteer-driven effort focused on identifying emerging organizations (often with budgets under \$500,000) across the region doing innovative work in support of women and girls. While these Leadership Awards grantee partners remain part of The Women's Foundation's network, our Stepping Stones grantmaking has represented a major shift to a focus on larger anchor organizations with strong capacity and long-standing track records of producing results. The new model is designed to:

- ❖ Coordinate grantmaking with technical assistance, leadership development, advocacy, and community education;
- ❖ Connect, leverage, and share the expertise of grantee partners working on an array of issues;

- ❖ Bring together public and private sector leaders from the philanthropic, government, business, and nonprofit communities; and
- ❖ Increase dialogue about and practice of incorporating a gender lens into philanthropy and direct service.

**At the same time, we have not veered from our focus on innovation.** For example, we are supporting **Community Preservation and Development Corporation's** cutting edge Home Health Care Technologies Training Program to upgrade the skills of home health aides and nurse's aides to provide services using telemedicine technology. We are supporting two organizations East of the River, **Marshall Heights Community Development Organization** and **Lydia's House**, to provide financial education services to an underserved population with untapped potential. In addition, many of our original Leadership Awards<sup>3</sup> Grantee Partners have grown with us. They have developed strong organizational capacity over the years and several of them are now also Stepping Stones grantee partners (e.g., **CASA of Maryland, Northern Virginia Family Service/Training Futures, and D.C. Employment Justice Center**).

**Toward building a new model of grantmaking, we have launched three funds, as outlined below.** An appendix listing all grantee partners, grant amounts, geographic focus, project summary, and potential impact is attached to this report.

**Financial Education and Wealth Creation Fund**, the objective of which is to help low-income, women-headed families in the Washington Metropolitan Area to obtain a base level of financial knowledge<sup>4</sup> and to increase their collective assets and income<sup>5</sup> by \$40 million in the next three years.

**Jobs Fund**, the objective of which is to help build the life-long economic security of women who head low-income families in the Washington Metropolitan Area by building better pathways to self-sufficient jobs and by increasing the percentage of single mothers being placed in, retaining, and advancing in high-growth sector jobs or non-traditional occupations. The Jobs Fund is targeting three main high-growth sectors in the region: health care; real estate; and protective services,<sup>6</sup> as well as non-traditional occupations for women.<sup>7</sup>

**Strategic Opportunity and Partnership Fund**, the objective of which is to provide grants to nonprofit organizations engaged in research, policy advocacy, grassroots organizing, technical assistance, or communications and media activities that support the overall goals of Stepping Stones.

---

<sup>3</sup> Signature awards program, which provides support to emerging, innovative non profits.

<sup>4</sup> For example, training in money management, saving/investing, credit repair, income, and shifting behavior patterns.

<sup>5</sup> For example, through debt reduction, receipt of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Individual Development Accounts (IDAs), savings accounts, increased income, and home ownership.

<sup>6</sup> Some examples of occupations include police officers, fire fighters, security guards, and occupations related to homeland security.

<sup>7</sup> The term "nontraditional employment" refers to occupations or fields of work for which individuals from one gender comprise less than 25 percent of the individuals employed in each such occupation or field of work.

**The Women's Foundation has seen a significant increase in annual grantmaking.** In fiscal year 2004, the Foundation's total grantmaking amounted to just over \$300,000. In fiscal year 2005, our grantmaking more than doubled to over \$700,000. In fiscal year 2006, we project that our grantmaking will reach the \$1 million level. This growth has, in large part, been possible because of major investments in and grantmaking via Stepping Stones. The average size of our grants has also increased. While the Leadership Awards program most recently provided annual grants of \$10,000, most Stepping Stones grants range between \$25,000 and \$50,000 annually.

**The Women's Foundation has enhanced its staffing and internal capacity.** The Foundation expanded its program team by creating three new positions: Vice President of Program and Operations who is responsible for overall leadership and direction of Stepping Stones, and two new senior-level Program Officer positions, tasked with managing program activities and leading issue area work within Stepping Stones. All of the new staff hires have a high level of collective experience running programs and developing policies impacting low-income women and families at the national and state level.

**Anne Mosle, President.** Anne has more than 15 years of experience in the nonprofit sector – specifically in philanthropy, leadership development, and programmatic work. She serves on the national board of Women & Philanthropy and is a member of the Children, Youth and Families Steering Committee of the Washington Regional Association of Grantmakers. Both *Jane* and *Working Women* magazines have recognized her as a leading woman activist. Prior to joining The Women's Foundation's staff, Anne served as Senior Vice President for Leadership Initiatives at the Center for Policy Alternatives (CPA) where she was responsible for development of new leadership initiatives including the creation of the Eleanor Roosevelt Global Leadership Institute. Anne led the development and implementation of CPA's premiere national campaign, *America's Economic Agenda: Women's Voices for Solutions*. She has extensive leadership development experience working with women and minority leaders from elected office, grassroots activism, business, and philanthropy.

Under Anne's leadership, the Foundation has increased grantmaking by more than 300%, engaged nearly 1,000 new donors across age, race, class, and the region and created a "beyond the check" Leadership Development Program for grant recipients. As highlighted in *The Washingtonian*, the Foundation has launched the region's premiere women's giving circle – the Rainmaker's Circle – one of a series of new entrepreneurial giving models to leverage women's leadership and impact. In May 2003, the Foundation released *A Portrait of Women and Girls in the Washington Metropolitan Area*, the first-ever comprehensive report on the lives of women and girls in the region. Anne is a graduate of the University of Richmond and did graduate coursework at Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies.

**Marjorie R. Sims, Vice President of Program and Operations.** Marjorie joined the Washington Area Women's Foundation in January 2005. She has over 20 years of experience as a policy advocate for women and girls. Marjorie most recently served as the Executive Director of the California Women's Law Center (CWLC). Founded in 1989, CWLC is the only statewide organization dedicated solely to advancing the civil rights of women and girls. Marjorie successfully designed and implemented a five-year strategic plan for the Law Center focused on sex discrimination, violence against women, women's health, economic security, race and gender, and exploitation of women. Prior to joining CWLC, Marjorie was a policy analyst for the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) where she was

responsible for conceptualizing and implementing ICRW's policy advocacy strategy in the areas of economics, health, population, reproductive health and rights, and women in decision-making.

Marjorie began her public policy career as a Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Fellow in the office of Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC). Following her work for Congresswoman Norton, she worked as a senior legislative assistant for the bipartisan Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues where she monitored and drafted legislation affecting women and families in the areas of education, women in development, child care, child support, and civil rights. When the Congressional Caucus lost its funding in 1995, Marjorie co-founded and served as executive director of Women's Policy, Inc. (WPI), which was established to conduct legislative research on the full spectrum of policy issues affecting women and families.

Marjorie currently serves on the boards of Women's Policy, Inc., the Project on Government Oversight, the Women's Institute for Secure Retirement, Women's Prerogative, and the Institute of Women & Ethnic Studies. She holds a Master of Arts degree in Governmental Policy from California State University, Dominguez Hills.

***Nisha Patel, Program Officer.*** Nisha joined The Women's Foundation in May 2005. Nisha has 10 years of experience working on policies and programs that impact low-income families. Her work on Stepping Stones is focused on the jobs, microenterprise and business ownership, and child care and early education issue areas. Prior to joining The Women's Foundation staff, Nisha was a Senior Policy Analyst at the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP). CLASP is a national nonprofit organization that works to improve the economic security, educational and workforce prospects, and family stability of low-income parents, children, and youth and to secure equal justice for all. Nisha's work over five years at CLASP included policy research, analysis, and advocacy related to implementation of welfare, workforce development, and work support programs.

Before working at CLASP, Nisha worked at the National Legal Aid and Defender Association where she was Program Coordinator for the Project for the Future of Equal Justice, an initiative focused on increasing access to civil legal services for low-income families nationwide. She pursued graduate field work at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and at the United Way of Greater St. Louis and the Reform Organization of Welfare in Missouri. In addition, she has worked in a number of direct social service settings, providing crisis counseling and life skills tutoring to low-income women and girls.

Nisha has also served as an Adjunct Professor at The George Washington University. She serves on the Board of Directors of Bread for the City, a non-profit organization that provides comprehensive services to low-income individuals in Washington, DC. Nisha holds a Master of Social Work degree from the George Warren Brown School of Social Work at Washington University in St. Louis and a Bachelor's degree from Vanderbilt University.

***Carolee Summers-Sparks, Program Officer.*** Carolee joined The Women’s Foundation in May 2005. Carolee has worked for more than 5 years in support of policies and programs that impact low-income women and their families. Her portfolio at the Washington Area Women’s Foundation includes the Rainmakers Giving Circle, Open Door Capacity Building Fund and the Stepping Stones Financial Education and Wealth Creation Fund.

Prior to joining The Women’s Foundation staff, Carolee was a Projects and Research Director at Women Work! The National Network for Women’s Employment. Women Work! is a national nonprofit membership organization dedicated to empowering women from diverse backgrounds achieve economic self-sufficiency through job readiness, education, training and employment. Carolee’s work at Women Work! included developing a financial education initiative *Making Money Work!*, and the organization’s largest program, *RITA (Recruiting for the Information Technology Age)*, an initiative to advance women’s technology education and careers.

Carolee holds a Master of Arts degree in Philosophy and Social Policy from The George Washington University and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy from Creighton University.

***Sylvia Kidder Barry, Director of Partnerships & Strategic Projects.***

Sylvia is currently focused on building education and engagement opportunities for the Foundation’s investors, partners, and other philanthropic leaders. She is also helping to lead the Foundation’s fundraising, national outreach, and strategic planning efforts. Before serving in her current role, Sylvia helped create and launch the Foundation’s new multi-faceted, multi-million dollar Initiative designed to increase the economic sustainability of low-income women-headed families.

Sylvia has consulted with a number of organizations in the philanthropic sector, including the United Way of America, GlobalGiving, and Social Enterprise Alliance. Prior to owning her consulting practice, Sylvia helped launch the U.S. and Canada program at Ashoka: Innovators for the Public, where she served as the Associate Director, directing the fellowship search and selection process.

Sylvia holds a Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration and Sociology/Anthropology from Principia College.

# Washington Area Women's Foundation's Stepping Stones Grantee Partners

Capital Area Asset Building Corporation (CAAB)  
CASA of Maryland  
Central American Resource Center - DC (CARECEN)  
CFED  
Community Preservation and Development Corporation  
DC Employment Justice Center  
DC Women's Agenda  
Goodwill of Greater Washington/ WORC  
Greater Washington Board of Trade  
Housing Counseling Services  
Lydia's House  
Manna, Inc.  
Marshall Heights Community Development Organization  
Northern Virginia Family Service  
Southern Institute on Children and Families – Southern Business Leadership Council  
The Urban Institute  
The Women's Center  
Urban Alliance Foundation  
Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW)  
YWCA National Capital Area

# Stepping Stones Contact Information

**The Women's Foundation Staff welcomes questions and input from our stakeholders.**

For overall questions, contact Marjorie Sims, Vice President of Program and Operations, at [msims@wawf.org](mailto:msims@wawf.org) or (202) 347-7737 x210. For specific questions about evaluation or Financial Education and Wealth Creation, contact Carolee Summers-Sparks, Program Officer, at [csummers@wawf.org](mailto:csummers@wawf.org) or (202) 347-7737 x211. For specific questions about research, Jobs, Microenterprise and Business Ownership, or Child Care and Early Education, contact Nisha Patel, Program Officer, at [npatel@wawf.org](mailto:npatel@wawf.org) or (202) 347-7737 x206.

