



# Madison

## COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

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[madisongives.org](http://madisongives.org)

## Women & Philanthropy: A Force for Change

By Martha Taylor



One of life's greatest joys is the giving of self – time, talent and resources. This concept of giving in everyday life – living philanthropically – permeates the teachings of all religions and humanitarian traditions. We see these principles applied to business, government and civic life resulting in great acts of good in our society and the concept of the common good.

In my board leadership role with Madison Community Foundation, my professional life as an executive for the University of Wisconsin Foundation and on countless primarily Lutheran-related boards for colleges, campus ministries and social services, I have observed the power of philanthropy as a force for good in the world.

Throughout history, many women have embodied these principles as givers. However, their financial contributions have been largely hidden and only understood relatively recently with the emergence of a new field of study and action: women's philanthropy.

With March being Women's History Month, it is a privilege to write about women's philanthropy – an area in which I am personally and professionally engaged.

Women & Philanthropy  
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**MCF's Investment Strategy  
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## Welcome to MCF, Catherine Frerker!

Catherine Frerker joined MCF in March as our new Office Coordinator on the finance and operations team. In this role, Catherine balances supporting her team and the overall MCF office. She serves as the initial point of contact for visitors and callers, prepares for meetings, and keeps the office running smoothly while also supporting accounting and technology operations. “A big part of my role will be finding ways we can become more organized and efficient as a team, whether that’s by digitizing paper files or revamping inefficient processes,” commented Catherine.

Originally from Kansas City, Catherine graduated from University of Oklahoma with a B.A. in Letters (History, Literature, Philosophy and Languages) and Psychology. A job at Epic brought her to the Midwest, and over the last several years, Catherine has become enamored with Madison.

“One of my favorite things about Madison is the vibrant sense of community. If I’m bored, I can always find a festival, show, community event, or park to go to,” stated Catherine. “I also love Madison’s lakes – there is nothing like watching the sunset over Lake Mendota or going out on the ice in the winter!”

In her new role, Catherine is excited to have a more direct tie to the Madison community she has come to know. She conducted several projects for nonprofit organizations in Oklahoma during her undergraduate studies and is grateful to be back in the nonprofit sector.



## Advisors: Developing Effective Family Giving Plans

Family giving plans can be powerful tools to help families give collectively through multiple generations and create lasting charitable legacies. These plans deepen connections among family members, give younger generations a voice, help families realize their charitable giving goals, and support their shared values.

As a trusted advisor, you may have clients ask you for help in creating their family giving plan. Whether a client’s plan uses a donor advised fund, private foundation or other giving strategy, its success hinges on its intentionality and its ability to engage future generations.

When helping your clients develop family giving plans, here are four crucial questions to ask:

### Question 1: What values motivate your giving?

The foundation of any successful family giving plan is alignment around the family’s values and vision for the future. Before you begin crafting a giving strategy, have an open conversation with your clients about the values that motivate their giving, and the role those values play in selecting the charitable causes and organizations they currently support.

It is also important to discuss the values your clients want to impart to future generations through their giving. As Mark Weber observed in his book [\*Spectrum of Legacies: The Gifts You Leave for Your Children and Community\*](#), “Surprisingly, or perhaps not, wealthy families tell researchers that money is one of the least important ‘assets’ they plan to leave to their children. Topping the list are values and life lessons.” Giving plans provide unique opportunities to share these values with younger generations in a positive and meaningful way.



## Women & Philanthropy continued from page 1

### Field of Women's Philanthropy Launched in Madison

The University of Wisconsin-Madison and the city of Madison are the birthplaces of the field of women's philanthropy. In the late 1980s, with the encouragement and support of family and philanthropists, Sondra Shaw-Hardy and I created focus groups of two age cohorts of Madison women to discuss the role of women in philanthropy.

In 1991, the New York Times Magazine featured this study and additional descriptions of my work in forming the Women's Philanthropy Council at the University of Wisconsin Foundation in an article "Alma Maters Court Their Daughters." That initial Madison cohort study, other larger studies and subsequent visibility because of exposure in The Times blossomed into national and international movement that included three books, a nonprofit of national scope, and then a full academic center with an endowed professorship about women's philanthropy.



Early in our research, we learned that women did not perceive themselves as philanthropic leaders and they were not being treated as such by development professionals. The women were not asked to give, and when they were, they were not asked in a way that was comfortable for them. Then, when they did decide to give, most often they were not credited with their gifts — their husbands were acknowledged and thanked.

Not asking women for gifts is a problem because the process of being asked for a gift both educates donors and informs philanthropy. By focusing only on men for gifts, the passions and interests of women were underrepresented at major institutions. This includes at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, as well as society as a whole.

### Everyone Wants to Be Effective, But for Women It's Personal

Considerable research now indicates that men and women engage with and carry out philanthropy differently. Sondra and I found that both women and men wanted to use their volunteer and personal experiences and financial resources to be effective philanthropists. But women were driven more by personal relationships, especially those with:

- The organization's leadership,
- Those benefitting from the gift, whenever possible, and
- Others in their network of family and friends.

An adage in the field is that women take 10 times longer to make a decision about a major gift. But when they do make that decision, the gift is 10 times larger and they bring 10 of their friends with them.

This emphasis on relationships is reflected in women's preferences for how they are acknowledged as well. Women generally find personal acknowledgement of their gifts important to them; public recognition, not as much.



## Women & Philanthropy continued from page 2

### Philanthropic Women Come Into Their Own

Women – married women – did not have full legal rights to their own money until the early 1970s. The empowerment of women as philanthropists became the last frontier of the women’s movement: women giving themselves, generously through major gifts, and to the areas of their own interest.

In addition to supporting the “traditional” areas of women’s giving –faith institutions, education, and helping those in need – women began to focus their giving on the needs of women and girls.

Research shows that investing in women benefits families, makes children more apt to thrive. A lack of financial resources and opportunities creates challenges that pose real barriers to advancement in society. Without intervention, these challenges often persist from one generation to the next. Philanthropic support can offer a chance to break the cycle by providing women the economic security and opportunities that come with education and job training.



Women philanthropists are discerning individuals. They study the issues and get involved and connected to their causes. They must continue to invest in large, focused efforts to societal issues to improve the life chances of all.

### Women’s Philanthropy in Our Community

My lifelong commitment to women reflects this belief that investing in women and girls greatly benefits society. Three of my favorite local examples of women helping women through Madison Community Foundation are:

- **[A Fund For Women](#)** – A permanent endowment started 25 years ago by Jane Coleman, who invited 100 women to contribute \$1,000 each. I was privileged to be among these founding donors. Today the fund distributes more than \$100,000 (and growing) each year to support women’s economic empowerment in our community
- **[Women Artists Forward Fund](#)** – Inspired by the “Forward” statue at the top of State Street and its female artist and funders, Madison artists Brenda Baker and Bird Ross, with support from dozens of local donors, established this permanent fund that now supports emerging and established women artists each year.

More women than ever realize that philanthropy can be one of the most meaningful parts of their lives. Helping others in both small and large ways brings real joy and can be a powerful force for change in our community and our world.

It is a privilege to work with – and be inspired by – so many strong women making a difference in Madison and around the world. My message to women AND men is to continue giving generously to the causes you find meaningful and impactful. Continue to be a force for good.

Madison, Wisconsin, the Nation and the World need philanthropy. PHILANTHROPY is the LOVE of humankind.



## Get to Know Catherine continued from page 2

“MCF supports so many different projects and people, and I love seeing grant money go out the door to organizations that I know are doing essential work,” commented Catherine. “I am inspired by this organization’s ambitions to help our community in new ways that are truly informed by the needs of those in our community.”

Outside of work, Catherine enjoys reading, crafting, being outside, spending time with friends and attending the many cultural events Madison has to offer. “Some of my favorite hobbies are singing in a local community choir and sampling different literary genres with my book club,” said Catherine.

Catherine is also a passionate environmental advocate in her free time. She hosts a biweekly “hour of action” as a part of the Madison chapter of Climate Changemakers for those wanting to advocate for nonpartisan climate policy. Catherine writes blog posts for a local zero waste store, Green Life Trading Company. “I also strive to live a low-waste lifestyle and like finding creative ways to repurpose old items, and I’m excited to find ways to bring this commitment to the MCF office as well,” commented Catherine.



## Family Giving Conversations continued from page 2

While some clients can clearly identify the values that drive their giving and the values they want to impart to future generations, others may find this challenging. When working with these clients, do not hesitate to take advantage of tools like [21/64’s Picture Your Legacy™](#) deck or [Stanford PACS’ Philanthropy Toolkit](#). If you would like additional assistance in preparing for or facilitating these conversations with your clients, MCF’s Donor Engagement staff would be happy to help!

### **Question 2: How will you document your values and intentions for the giving plan?**

Once a client has identified the values that drive their giving and those they would like to impart to younger family members, it is critical to document them. Doing so will provide future generations with guidance on carrying out the family giving plan when your client is no longer able to do so.

Clients can document their values and intentions in a number of ways, depending on the giving strategy they select. For clients establishing a donor advised fund, this may take the form of a simple letter outlining the fund’s intended purpose. For clients establishing a private foundation, this may take the form of a mission statement or charter.

### **Question 3: How and when do you want to engage younger generations in the plan?**

Family giving plans are great ways for families to involve younger generations in the giving process before they begin making giving decisions. In its study, [“Parenting and Philanthropy: Growing the Next Generation of Givers,” Fidelity Charitable](#) found that “sixty-two percent of parents who give also talk to their kids about giving, either through planned or spontaneous conversation – and actively engage them in planning, giving, and volunteering.”

In addition to providing younger family members with the opportunity to observe how older family members give, discussing the family giving plan with them can help convey the general importance of giving from an early age. As Fidelity Charitable’s study noted, “of the parents who give, more than three-quarters (81%) of their children have participated in giving activities within the last year ... While almost three-quarters (70%) participated in these activities with other family members, nearly half (48%) did so independently.”



## Family Giving Conversations continued from page 2

People who want to engage younger generations in their family giving plan can do so in a variety of ways. Some families provide younger members the opportunity to research organizations and provide suggestions on where to direct distributions from the family's donor advised fund. Others organize giving days where younger family members can attend or volunteer at charitable events held by the organizations they support to better understand the impact those organizations have on their community.

### **Question 4: Who will carry out the family giving plan when you are unable to do so?**

To ensure that your client's family giving plan remains active and effective, it's essential to identify and mentor future leaders within the family who will take on the responsibility of guiding the philanthropic efforts as older generations step back.

Succession planning includes both practical and emotional components, such as discussing how leadership roles will be passed on and how new additions to the family can be integrated into the giving process. It also involves clearly defining the expectations and responsibilities of each generation to ensure the plan's sustainability.

(NOTE: If your client is including a donor advised fund in their family giving plan, they also need to provide the fund sponsor with the name of the person who will be directing distributions when they are unwilling or unable to do so. Not all donor advised fund sponsors allow fundholders to appoint successor advisors so, if this is important to your client, be sure they select a fund sponsor that does.)

Looking for additional resources on family giving plans?

We would be happy to help! Alison Helland, Director of Donor and Advisor Engagement, can assist you or refer you to another member of our Donor Engagement team to serve as a resource for your specific situation. You can reach Alison via email at [ahelland@madisongives.org](mailto:ahelland@madisongives.org) or via phone at 608-446-5937.

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Thank you to Ho-Chunk Gaming Madison, Baird, TruStage, American Printing and Alliant Energy Foundation for sponsoring this year's Madison Gives annual dinner. This evening of celebrating philanthropy and impact in the

Madison community wouldn't be possible without their support. Madison Gives is May 20th at 5:00 p.m. at Monona Terrace. Although our in-person event is at capacity, you can still join us virtually at no cost!

## Upcoming Dates to Remember

MAY

20

### Madison Gives 2025

MCF's annual celebration of philanthropy and impact in the Madison Community at 5 p.m. at Monona Terrace

[Register for the Virtual Event Today!](#)

MAY

26

### Memorial Day: Office Closed

The MCF office will be closed for Memorial Day as staff enjoy time with family and friends.

JUN

03

### Advisor Webinar

Join us for the second installment of our 2025 Advisor Webinar Series. George Suttles and Steve Snyder from Commonfund will present "Key Issues Impacting Philanthropy and Foundations Today".

[Register Today!](#)