

May 17, 2010

The New York Women's Foundation Honors Mary J. Blige, Eileen Fisher and Margarita Rosa at 23rd Annual Celebrating Women® Breakfast

Cross-Cultural Alliance of Women Celebrates 68 Grantee Partners and Recognizes Work of Pioneering Women Breakfast Helps Foundation Exceed \$1.4 Million Fundraising Goal

New York, NY (May 17, 2010)- On May 13, 2010, more than 2,300 women and men gathered for The New York Women's Foundation's® 23rd Annual Celebrating Women® Breakfast at the Hilton Grand Ballroom in New York City. This year's breakfast, emceed by CNN Anchor and Special Correspondent Soledad O'Brien, celebrated the accomplishments of the Foundation's 68 grantee partners and honored the work of three trailblazing women:

Award-Winning Singer and Philanthropist Mary J. Blige, Founder and Chief Creative Officer of EILEEN FISHER, Inc. Eileen Fisher, and Social Justice Advocate and Executive Director of Grand Street Settlement Margarita Rosa. Entrepreneur, Author, Activist, and Special Guest Kathy LeMay also shared a few words about her background in philanthropy. The breakfast helped The New York Women's Foundation exceed its \$1.4 million fundraising goal.

Despite the Great Recession, in 2009 the Foundation increased its grantmaking by 20 percent. In its Spring 2010 Grant Cycle, The New York Women's Foundation (NYWF) awarded \$1.48 million to 31 community-based organizations that serve the needs of women and families in New York City. For 23 years, The New York Women's Foundation (NYWF) has been a steadfast partner with over 240 community-based organizations and their dedicated, courageous leaders and will continue its commitment to supporting efforts that address women's economic security in 2010.

"At The New York Women's Foundation we are going to be doing more to increase our investment in women and families in New York," said Ana Oliveira, NYWF® President and CEO. "The solutions that we fund - as we found out - are very possible. They can happen. So we are going to turn crisis into opportunity and scale up. Together, with the help of our grantee partners and loyal supporters, we will accelerate solutions."

The special event kicked off with an invigorating Punjab harvest dance performance by NYC Bhangra, followed by videos about the Foundation's work and introductions to the amazing women behind it. Each honoree spoke about her own activism and was presented with NYWF's Walking Stick Award made by young women of the Youth Empowerment Mission. The Walking Stick Awards are works of art that are personally made to capture the strength and beauty of the women honored.

Mary J. Blige had tears in her eyes when discussing the motivation behind her own organization FFAWN, the Foundation For the Advancement of Women Now. She admitted that music was a savior from her own personal struggles and explained how it gave her a channel to reach out to other women and for them to help heal each other.

Eileen Fisher, recipient of The New York Women's Foundation's Vision Award, spoke of her journey to success and her company's commitment to social responsibility, including dedication to the environment and the well-being of women and girls.

"I want to make sure that we don't forget those honest workers - millions of them - women and men who move our world along every day. People like my mom, Julia Rosa who, through a combination of affections and coercion, set and kept me on the 'straight and narrow' with my eyes on the prize and the pedal to the metal," remarked Margarita Rosa, recipient of the 2010 Celebration Women Award for championing human rights and social justice. "The New York Women's Foundation has a wonderful mission; it supports, recognizes and honors the struggles, and celebrates the triumphs of women and girls." Bringing tears to the audience, grantee speakers Antoinette Coffi-Ahibo of Communities.

Homeowners and Neighbors Gaining Economic Rights (CHANGER) and Karry and Kate Calderon of Row New York took to the stage to speak about how their lives have been impacted by the grantee partner organizations of NYWF.

Antoinette Coffi-Ahibo shared her struggles with the foreclosure of her home, which she successfully defended. Antoinette encouraged the audience, "So I tell you: when something is wrong in your life, you can't be embarrassed or afraid of mockery. You have to let people know so they can help you."

Twin sisters Kate and Karry Calderon captivated the audience. "We're seniors in high school, but getting here was not as simple as it sounds. Life has been difficult. Our father did not live with us. Our mother was the single parent of four children. Our older sister was diagnosed with an incurable disease ... and we have to constantly worry about how we're going to pay our bills."

"In fall 2007 we were introduced to Row New York and competitive rowing. Rowing is a mental sport... If I can row in the rain in 40 degrees; I can stay up a little longer and finish this project. I can do the 20'h push-up. I can ace this test. I can leg press 540 pounds. We think to ourselves, "It's not all bad." ... this makes us the luckiest people in the world," said Karry and Kate Calderon who will be freshmen this fall at Bryn Mawr and Queens College, respectively. "At Row New York we pull for each other. It's like, 'Your strength is my strength.' Row New York helped us to see a little further into the future. Now we know exactly what we want. To go fast; to win. To not give up. To be precise. To excel in college. To row together."

In addition, Kathy LeMay shared her own experience of growing up on government assistance and spoke to a vision inside of her that didn't quite match her surroundings but inspired her to never give up. She said that she is often asked if she is a fundraiser. "Yes, if by that you mean I'm a wealth re-distributor, in service of my soul, then yes," she quipped. She urged attendees to tap into their philanthropic side by saying, "We are the philanthropists we have been waiting for. There isn't anyone else coming. If not us, then who?,

Other distinguished guests in attendance included Ambassador Ruben Beltran, Consul General of Mexico in New York City; State Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins; Secretary of State Lorraine Cortes-Vazquez; and New York City Council Speaker Christine Quinn, Chair of The New York Women's Foundation Board of Directors Carolyn Buck Luce; Board Members and Co-Chairs of the 2010 Celebrating Women Breakfast Sayu Bhojwani and Susan Cullman, among others. The 2010 grantee partners celebrated at the breakfast include:

A Better Balance
ACCION New York
Adhikaar for Human Rights and Social Justice
African Hope Committee

Agenda for Children Tomorrow
Audre Lorde Project
Barnard Center for Research on Women
Brooklyn Workforce Innovations
Brooklyn Young Mothers' Collective
Brotherhood/Sister Sol
BuildOn
Cause Effective
Center for Family Life in Sunset Park
Center for New York City Neighborhoods
CHANGER
Correctional Association of New York
Cypress Hills Child Care Corporation
Day One
Families for Freedom
FIERCE
Figure Skating in Harlem
Foundation for the Advancement of Women Now
Girls Incorporated of New York City
Good Old Lower East Side
Grace Outreach
Grameen America
Greenhope Services for Women
Grit TV
Hot Bread Kitchen
Hour Children
Housing Plus Solutions
Legal Momentum
Local Development Corporation of East New York
Love Heals: The Alison Gertz Foundation for AIDS Education
Make the Road New York
Mt. Sinai Sexual Assault and Violence Intervention Program
National Mobilization Against Sweatshops
Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition
ParentJobNet
Queers for Economic Justice
Red Hook Initiative
ReServe
Restaurant Opportunities Center of New York

Ridgewood Bushwick Senior Citizens Council
RightRides for Women's Safety
Row New York
Sadie Nash Leadership Project
Sakhi for South Asian Women
Sa uti Yetu Center for African Women
Service Women's Action Network
Sisterhood Mobilized for AIDS/HIV Research and Treatment
St. Vincent's Services
Sylvia Rivera Law Project
TAM KEEN: The Center for Arab American Empowerment
Taproot Foundation
Turning Point for Women and Families
Upwardly Global
Urban Justice Center - Homelessness Outreach and Prevention Project
VAMOS Unidos
Voces Latinas
Voices UnBroken
Westchester Square Partnership
Women for Afghan Women
Women's Center for Education and Career Advancement
Women's HIV Collaborative of New' York
Women's Housing and Economic Development Corp
Young Women of Color HIY/AIDS Coalition
Young Women's Christian Association of Queens
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About The New York Women's Foundation (NYWF®)

The New York Women's Foundation is a voice for women and a force for change. We are a cross-cultural alliance of women catalyzing partnerships and leveraging human and financial capital to achieve sustained economic security and justice for women and girls. With fierce determination, we mobilize hearts, minds and resources to create an equitable and just future for women, families and communities in New York City.

Please visit www.nywf.org for more information.