



Marie C. Wilson to be Keynote Speaker

Marie C. Wilson will be the keynote speaker at the 2015 annual Iowa Women's Foundation luncheon which will be held on October 14th, 2015 at the Coralville Marriott Hotel and Convention Center.

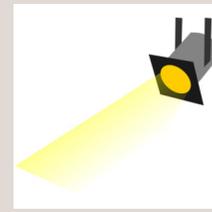
Wilson was the first woman elected to the Des Moines City Council as a member-at-large in 1983. She is the founder of The White House Project, creator of Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work® Day, former president of the Ms. Foundation for Women, and author of *Closing the Leadership Gap: Why Women Can and Must Help Run the World* (Viking 2004) and *Getting Big: Reimagining the Women's Movement*.



"Marie C. Wilson's life-long advocacy for women and girls has impacted thousands as she served to advance women's leadership across their personal, professional and political lives. We at the IWF are thrilled to hear from her firsthand how she continues to inspire generations of women and girls. Her commitment and energy are contagious," said Dawn Oliver Wiand, Executive Director of the Iowa Women's Foundation.

Individual seats and group tables are still available to attend the luncheon and hear Ms. Wilson speak. Scheduled for October 14, 2015, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Coralville Marriott Hotel and Convention Center, you can register to attend the luncheon at www.iawf.org/whats_happening/events.

Grantee Spotlights



Strong Girls Read Strong Books



Drs. Renita Schmidt and Amanda Thein, associate professors of the Department of Teaching and Learning at the University of Iowa's College of Education, developed a research project to analyze how literature can help empower girls to become strong women. Strong Girls Read Strong Books is an after-school program for 4th-6th grade girls at Grant Wood Elementary School, one of the lowest academically performing schools in Iowa City. Grant Wood Elementary has a racially diverse student body and 77% of whom are in the Free and Reduced Lunch program. Strong Girls Read Strong Books focuses on assisting girls who are considered "at-risk" to think of the possibilities of their futures.

Strong Girls Read Strong Books aims to instill confidence in girls by inspiring them through literature.

"Reading can be really powerful for girls and for women," said Thein. Every Friday afternoon, the girls gather together to read books with strong female protagonists and use writing, illustration, drama, and movement to interpret and respond to what they've read. "We want to provide a means for girls to see themselves as readers, thoughtful decision makers, and leaders," remarked Schmidt.

The girls read a wide variety of books, often regarding a girl facing some sort of hardship and how she's able to cope with her situation. One book that particularly resonated with the girls was a graphic novel, *El Deafo* by Cece Bell, about a deaf bunny and the superpowers she gains from having a hearing aid. Though the story may seem like fiction, it is actually a memoir loosely based on the author's journey of growing up hearing-impaired after meningitis left her deaf.

For both Schmidt and Thein, reading during their childhood provoked them to dream about what they could become, "We're avid readers and we both know the books we read made a difference...we could maybe be this or maybe this. Have you thought about being a ballet dancer or a track star?" explained Schmidt. They hope to pass their love for reading onto the girls and open their eyes to a world of opportunities.

With the help of the Iowa Women's Foundation grant, the girls in the program get to keep the books once they are finished reading them. "To have books in your home is such a special thing," remarked Thein. "If you own books, you are likely going to be an avid reader, based on research. They have a personal library and they are

the Strong Girls books," said Schmidt, explaining the importance of allowing the girls to keep the books.

In addition to helping young girls, Strong Girls Read Strong Books also helps female pre-service teachers, who volunteer to assist leading the discussion groups with the girls. The program offers an opportunity for the pre-service teachers to gain real-world experience working with "at-risk" girls.



It's clear that these books are making a positive impact on the girls. The reading achievement scores of the 4th grade participants improved drastically from 38% to 77% reaching proficiency after being in the program. Equally as important as the statistics is the encouraging feedback they continually receive from the girls'

teachers, who have seen improvements in both behavior and academic performance of the girls. They express the need for Strong Girls Read Strong Books to keep coming back each year.

Strong Girls Read Strong Books may have started as a research project but it has since evolved into a community service program. "If it was just a research project, we would be done, but the program really matters," remarked Thein. With other schools expressing interest in the program, Schmidt and Thein struggle with whether they should expand the program. "We really want to be in the middle of this, if we extend it, we won't be in the middle of it," explained Schmidt.

By Kim Swanson

Planting a Seed to Grow a STEM



The Science Center of Iowa opened its doors in October of 1970 and exemplified innovation by becoming one of the first hands-on learning centers in

the world. The groundbreaking idea to create interactive exhibits soon spread like wildfire. With its immense popularity growing rapidly, the Center chose to expand and open a new facility in 2005. Some may consider Des Moines the home of the Science Center of Iowa, but in reality the Center reaches all 99 counties through distance programming, and through programs like Girls in Science Festival, which unites women and girls from all over the state.

The Science Center of Iowa's mission is "to be a quality community resource for informal science learning where children, families, school groups and individuals come to explore science and technology." Emilee Richardson, the marketing and communications manager for the Center, shared that the Science Center is not only for children, but targeted to lifelong learning to keep individuals interested and engaged in science for a lifetime. An example of the Science Center of Iowa acting out its mission was on February 7, 2015, when the group hosted the Girls in Science Festival where young women and girls were able to explore careers in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Throughout the day the girls were also offered free workshops they could attend to foster an interest in science. The goal of the event was to empower girls to pursue careers in the STEM fields. Richardson explained that one of the main goals of the event was to pair up girls with mentors. She explained that one of the main reasons girls don't pursue STEM careers is because often times they can't imagine themselves in

that field. A college STEM mentor shared, "It's important so that young women realize that it's possible to be an engineer or be in the science field and that even though it may be male dominated, women can be just as good at it and better."

In addition to the Girls in Science Festival, the group hosts a Pajama Party, Meals with Mentors and many more programs for girls of all ages. Richardson explained the Meals with Mentors, is a really special event where middle school, high school, college undergraduates and working women scientists come together and talk about career possibilities. A STEM mentor explained, "Events like this may completely change a girl's view of STEM. I want to be a part of that."

The funding provided by the Iowa Women's Foundation has supported the Science Center in creating programs and also aided in offsetting costs for girls' participation. While last year the Science Center engaged 3,500 people through the Girls in Science program, the center aims to continue to grow and refine programs to better suit the girls' needs. Richardson shared one of her team's goals is to learn more about the girl's needs; currently, this is being executed by focusing on receiving more feedback in order to better serve them.



Richardson also shared that the excitement of opening the eyes of children to careers in STEM motivates her to keep pursuing her work. Her advice to others who would like to get involved or help the cause is simple: "Individuals don't need to be a part of a large center to make a difference. Even the simple act of sharing her story can have an impact."

By Nicole Neal

Save The Date!

The 2015 Iowa Women's Foundation luncheon will be Wednesday, October 14, 2015, at the Coralville Marriott and

Interested in Supporting the Iowa Women's Foundation?

Want to do more? Looking for volunteer opportunities? Contact Dawn Oliver Wiand at (319) 774-3814.

More about the Iowa Women's Foundation - Visit our website at www.iawf.org

Iowa Women's Foundation
2201 East Grantview Drive
Suite 200
Coralville, Iowa 52241



"Like us on Facebook"

319.774-3813
info@iawf.org
www.iawf.org