



Manhattan's Fairy Godmothers ensure that a community can stand together.

THE PHILANTHROPISTS: FAIRY GODMOTHERS

For women in the Manhattan area, the idea of a fairy godmother may sound like a tale of fiction, but thanks to a group of philanthropic women, Cinderella's saving grace is a reality.

Since 2006, the Fairy Godmothers have been helping women in the greater MHK area through difficult times, whether paying for new tires, helping with tuition, writing the daycare check or footing the bill for a new set of dentures.

The Fairy Godmothers, an affiliate of the Greater Manhattan Community Foundation, was created to meet a gap in financial assistance for women. "We decided it was time women had somewhere to go to help them with financial needs; no one else covered that niche specifically," says Shirley DeLano, past chair of the organization.

Six-plus years in, they've served hundreds of women, having given out \$27,000 in grants in 2012 alone. But that doesn't mean they're seeking any credit. The Fairy Godmothers work solely through outside social agencies in Manhattan to reach grantees.

Women in need go to one of the cooperating agencies that screen them and help them fill out an application, which is then given to the Fairy Godmothers' board. Once approved, the Co-Chair notifies the applicable organization. From there,

the organization notifies the grantee, allowing for a level of anonymity, as well as providing a broader outreach for local social agencies.

The Fairy Godmothers also work by paying vendors directly, such as a car garage or medical office, so the grantees aren't burdened with payment responsibility. Grants, which average \$325 each, are delivered within 48 hours.

More than 600 Godmothers make up the local charity—though they are always looking for new members. To become a Fairy Godmother a donation of \$100 is required with the hopes that an annual donation will be made of an amount preferred by the Fairy Godmother. Fundraisers and outside sponsors also help fund donations and the organization's bills.

"Our operating expenses are very frugal," DeLano says. "We'd rather see the money go into grants."

As for the desire to help others, the organization is always growing, hoping to have \$500,000 in their endowment fund by 2015.

"The things we do, no one else does. It may be a small group that we reach, but it's meant a lot to those people," Delano says. "Our goal of Women Helping Women allows women in the community to work together on this worthwhile project" **M**

HONORABLE MENTION

Edna Williams – Curator of the Wolf House Museum and founding member of the Manhattan/Riley County Preservation Alliance (along with Pat O'Brien and Linda Glasgow). DAR honoree for community preservation.