

Kay Dougherty

Kay Dougherty, active WIN member since 2018, has found the WIN initiative she was meant to lead. This is her story:

In 2008, I was serving as Senior Director of Admissions along with my husband, David, who was Headmaster at The Hill School, a 9-12 co-ed boarding school of 515 students, located in Pottstown, PA, a small-town west of Philadelphia.

In early September of that year, I received a call from Charlie Frank, the Chairman of the Board of Trustees at The Hill. He and his wife, Betty, had a vision. They wanted to establish a program for students at The Hill School to encourage young people to volunteer their time, talent, and efforts to benefit their communities. They wanted to teach them about philanthropy, literally a “love of mankind” that ideally should be inspiration for any community service. They were convinced that the program they had in mind would establish in those students’ life-long philanthropic commitment. I agreed to run the program and they agreed to fund it.

By 2012, through the Franks’ leadership and the generosity of several other donors, The Student Philanthropy Council (SPC) became an endowed program at the school. Each year, the SPC now awards \$16,000 worth of grants to local non-profit organizations within the Pottstown Community.

As I think about the first year of the Program, I am reminded of one of the student comments, “Mrs. Dougherty, I had no idea it was so hard to give money away.” Boy, did they learn, and ten years later six of the twelve students who were part of that first SPC now run non-profits! To me that is an absolutely amazing statistic!

Now WIN is undertaking its own Youth Philanthropy program. WIN Members Sadie Campbell, Kim Nelson, Sharon Stewart, Maureen Vasquez, and Isabella Hinds, along with Sarah Brickel’s, Development Director at GLOW Academy in Wilmington are planning away.

As we began to discuss the details of how our “Student Giving Circle” might be developed within WIN, there were several themes that will shape the program long term:

1. The leadership and inspiration for this program came from the “ground up”; it was not an idea from the Board down, but began with regular old WIN members who felt that this was a program worth exploring, given WIN’s belief in the power of collective giving to influence the quality of life in our community.

2. The importance of bringing together both committee members with diverse talents and students who have different interests, experiences, and skills on common footing
3. Sticking to one of WIN's cardinal values – perseverance. This was not going to be a program that could be developed overnight, and thanks to patient and persistent support of this concept of student philanthropy, both by WIN's leadership and committee members, we have moved toward and developed a program that we hope will be the model for others within our community.
4. The importance of collaboration. Currently WIN is collaborating with **GLOW Academy** and with the **YWCA**. In determining where to begin with this program, we thought about how best to “find” that first group of students.. We talked about a public school, an independent school, or college students. For **two** reasons we ended up asking GLOW Academy to partner with us. First, we wanted to start with a group of students whose schedules permitted them to meet at a regular time, once the grant process began, and one that insured consistent participation. In other words, without the interruption of athletics, club work, and other school requirements. Second, we wanted to work not with a group of students whose families were on the giving end of philanthropy, but those who were beneficiaries of it. In other words, these were kids who might not imagine themselves as philanthropists. After discussing several options, Glow Academy stood out as the perfect place, a school that met both our criteria. We approached Sarah Brickels, the Director of Development at GLOW; who willingly and enthusiastically agreed to work with us in identifying the first student participants and helping us think through many of the planning strategies.

Then our Circle focused inward to determine how best to prepare **ourselves** for working with a group of 9th and 10th grade girls at GLOW. That took us to the YWCA, where in talking with Velva Jenkins we decided that our committee would in January 2022 participate in a training course in diversity that will help us prepare for working with We approached more self-awareness

So where are we now in our planning?

While we continue to work on creating a welcoming environment among our committee members, giving each member an opportunity to contribute according to her time, interest, experiences, and skills, we move ahead. Throughout February, we will hold 5 hour-long information sessions for the

5-10 girls who will be the first to participate in our “Student Giving Circle.” Those sessions will be led by Wilmington community leaders with diverse backgrounds. One important goal of the Committee is self-reliance for the young people. We hope to transition quickly to a time when we adults back off, in terms of running the program, and turn a great deal of the decision-making and leadership over to the students themselves.

In the fall of 2022 those same girls who benefitted from those information sessions, now 10th and 11th graders, will prepare for a spring grants cycle, just as we do at WIN. In other words, beginning in September of 2022, with our assistance, they will determine which organizations to support. Will there be annual themes like the ones WIN focuses on - Education, Health, Arts and Culture, Environment? Or will their scope be broader – Women and Children’s Health? They will decide. They will develop a marketing plan that will encourage the appropriate organizations to apply. They will create an application process – complete with a calendar that details the process – that will both make it easy for organizations to apply but also give the students the information they need to make difficult, but well informed, decisions later. They will design a process by which they will review the applications in order to determine who will receive their grants. And finally, they will establish a process by which they will award the grants to the fortunate recipients. All that work will be completed in the fall, so that early in 2023, the Student Giving Circle members will be well prepared and confident in their ability to launch the Program.

Funding, of course, will be key to the future work of the “Student Giving Circle.” As the program began to take shape, we approached WIN founding member, Magda Ratajski, who earlier had made a generous donation to WIN to initiate a program to honor Terry Richman, one of WIN’s early presidents. Magda wanted to establish a program that recognized Terry’s long-term commitment to lifelong learning, and thankfully she, with grace and generosity, saw the “Student Giving Circle” as an ideal way to pay tribute to her dear friend.

Let me conclude by saying that, for certain, one measure of success of this program will be that the girls selected to participate in it will grow to understand the value and importance of financially supporting organizations within their community (including their own school). But we on the committee hope for more. We believe that, although financial support is vital to the important work of non-profits, one’s time and talent are just as indispensable. Through our work with these students, we intend to remind them of that point often, and in effect, lead them to see themselves, as the Franks said at The Hill School in Pennsylvania, as life-long philanthropists,

always eager to give of their time, treasure, and talent to promote and advance those organizations that contribute the most to the welfare of their communities.