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The New Voices Initiative

The Prostitution Round Table:

A Community Learning Venture

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Our work on this project has focused on facilitating a learning process designed to enable community organizations to more effectively address both the needs of prostituted women and the issues surrounding prostitution. This process has involved a broad spectrum of community members in a collective learning process, with participants providing information and expertise, offering feedback, engaging in consensus-building, and instigating community change.

Although the Prostitution Round Table is a work in process, the project has exceeded our expectations in several ways. We are heartened by the recognition that prostitution is a significant issue in our community, as evidenced by the fact that more than 35 community organizations are involved in the project. We have also been gratified by the level of commitment participating members have made to the issue.

In addition to attending monthly meetings, PRT participants have read volumes of background materials, shared their insights and learning with others, and initiated the idea of going beyond the original commitment to a nine-month project. The most exciting impacts of the project are the changes in perspectives reported by PRT members, their willingness to apply this learning in their



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Sponsorship of the Prostitution: Reframing Issues, Making Connections conference on April 12, 2002 at Grand Valley State University's DeVos Center. This day-long conference, open to the entire community, will include presentations by survivors of prostitution and pioneers in helping prostituted women and girls make healthy choices.

Contact us for more information about the Prostitution Round Table project.

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Prostitution: Reframing Issues, Making Connections

A conference for the whole community

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8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Loosemore Auditorium
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Grand Valley State University
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Presented by
The Prostitution Round Table
A project of
The Nokomis Foundation's New Voices Initiative
Co-sponsored by the School of Social Work,
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We came face to face with the realities of street prostitution. The average age of entry into prostitution is 14 to 18. Nationally, 90 percent of women in prostitution are survivors of sexual violence such as incest and sexual assault - and typically this violence is endured repeatedly. Sixty-six percent suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Eighty-four percent report current or past homelessness. From 95 to 99 percent have substance abuse addictions.

Realities such as these moved us to re-examine our own images about prostitution and the idea of prostitution as a "victimless crime." Following the lead of survivors and authorities in the field, we stopped stereotyping women as "prostitutes" and started understanding prostitution as a system of exploitation. This rethinking of the issue, reflected in our use of the term "prostituted" women and girls, has laid the foundation for our work - and for the sense of hopefulness we have about the possibilities for addressing this issue in a positive way.

Prostitution: Reframing Issues. Making Connections is our effort to share our learning with the Grand Rapids community. This conference offers the opportunity to listen to the strong voices of survivors of prostitution and recognized leaders in the field, rethink the issue, and consider the many ways we can respond effectively as a community. Collectively, we hope to envision a better Grand Rapids where we do not tolerate the exploitation of others and instead welcome prostituted women and girls into our community's circle of caring. We hope to see you on April 12!

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Norma Hotaling is the founder and director of Standing Against Global Exploitation (SAGE). Located in San Francisco, SAGE is a non-profit human rights organization that offers peer-based and holistic services to women who are survivors of sexual exploitation, substance abuse, domestic violence, and other forms of trauma and to girls who are at risk of exploitation. Through the First Offender Prostitution Program (FOPP), SAGE also works with men convicted for soliciting for purposes of prostitution. The SAGE programs have received the Peter

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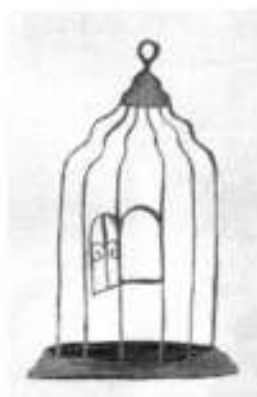
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Click here for the latest updates and announcements from the Nokomis Foundation.

Click here for our technical assistance section --

loo\$e change --
tips, tricks, and tools to make organizations strong.



Our Vision

The Nokomis Foundation strives to make a difference in the lives of women and girls primarily by advocating for women-friendly policies, celebrating women's accomplishments, instilling economic self-sufficiency, promoting healthy choices, and seeking out new opportunities that advance our mission. We are proud to play a role in the worldwide effort to help women and girls achieve their personal goals and live their dreams.

Our Mission

The mission of the Nokomis Foundation is to create a stronger voice for women and girls.

We carry out this mission by providing:

- Advocacy for the needs of women and girls
- Funding, expertise and resources for organizations serving women and girls
- Opportunities to convene around gender-based issues

Founder's Message

When I was growing up, I had no voice. Later, as a teacher of young girls, I found myself urging them to speak up, express themselves, shout and sing. Sometimes I was successful; too often, I was not.

We can't live our dreams until we can name them. Despite decades of progress, too many women are still silent -- victims of oppression, discrimination and their own fears.

For me, Nokomis is about creating a world where women can sing. In helping them discover their voices, I am finding my own.

—Twink Frey, Founder

Taking Flight: Grants for Girls

During 2001 the Nokomis Foundation introduced a new grantmaking initiative — *Taking Flight: Grants for Girls*. By creating a separate

New Voices Initiative: The Prostitution Round Table

In 2000 the Nokomis Foundation launched a new venture, the *New Voices Initiative*, in an effort to gain a better understanding of women and girls who are marginalized in our community. The first project of the *New Voices Initiative* is *The Prostitution Round Table*. Click here for more information about the Prostitution Round Table and our soon-to-be-released report, *We Can Do Better: Helping Prostituted Women and Girls in Grand Rapids Make Healthy Choices*.

Unique Approach Helps Small Foundation Make a Big Difference

The Nokomis Foundation white paper, *Unique Approach Helps Small Foundation Make a Big Difference*, details our early

Board of Directors

Twink Frey, Founder and Chair
Jim McKay
Mary Alice Williams
Pat Oldt
Kym Mulhern

Grant Committee

Mary Alice Williams, Chair
Delvenia Beason
Julie Guevara
Patti Gardner
Kevin O'Neill

grantmaking program for girls, we can ensure ongoing, concentrated support for girls in our community. This initiative will also strengthen our Taking Flight partner organizations as they meet together for networking and technical assistance sessions. The structure of the Taking Flight program also supports young women interested in philanthropy—with interns coordinating the Taking Flight grantmaking process. Click here for information on the 2002 Taking Flight: Grants for Girls grant cycle.

experiences with long-term capacity building grants. Click here for a copy of the report published by the Nokomis Foundation.

Voices

The Nokomis Foundation publishes an informational newsletter, *Voices*, three times each year. Every issue includes our technical assistance publication,

loo\$e change.

Click here if you would like to be added to the Nokomis Foundation mailing list.

Kay Griffith Hammond
L'Tanya Haith Ojo
Susan Shannon
Katie Bode-Lang

Affiliations

Women's Funding Network
Association of Small Foundations
Council of Michigan Foundations
Council on Foundations
Grantmakers for Effective Organizations (GEO)
National Network of Grantmakers
Independent Sector

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Issue Twenty — January 2002

Even if we dismiss the claim that women's rights are central to human rights, there are centuries of evidence that physical, political and economic violence against women is a harbinger of other forms of violence.

Amy Gaiazza, Ph.D.

*Why Gender Matters in Understanding September 11:
Women, Militarism, and Violence*

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[Inside Story](#)

Women's philanthropy at work in New York . . .

After September 11, all of us here at the Nokomis Foundation tried to think of an appropriate way to respond to the tragedies in New York and Washington DC. Sharing the sentiment of so many others, we wanted to do something to help. But what? Although we typically don't provide funds for projects and programs outside the Grand Rapids area, we wanted to support the women and girls of New York City in a manner consistent with our mission.

We learned that one of our sister funds, the New York Women's Foundation—located just a few miles from the World Trade Center buildings, had created the Women's Disaster Relief Fund to support women-serving organizations affected by the tragedy. The Nokomis Foundation provided a \$10,000 grant to this new fund. This special fund seemed to be an excellent vehicle for our support.

The economic impact of the terror attacks on women and women-serving organizations in New York is almost unfathomable. Thousands of displaced, unskilled, low-income employees are without work – most of them are uninsured and many of them are women. Thousands of women have lost family members who were primary breadwinners. Small, community-based nonprofit organizations serving women and girls are stretched to their limits as they provide services during the crisis.

By establishing the Disaster Relief Fund, the New York Women's Fund has spoken out on behalf of low-income women and girls affected by the devastating tragedy in New York City. We salute the New York Women's Fund in their efforts to provide support for the organizations assisting women affected by the September 11 attacks.

Kym Mulhern, Executive Director

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Point to Ponder

The UN Human Rights Commission reports that two thirds of all people who have been turned into refugees in recent years have been women and their dependent children.

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Recent Grants

The Nokomis Foundation has recently awarded the following grants:

Advocacy

Afghan Women's Mission, Pasadena, California, \$2,000 in support of the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA)

Communities for Equity, Grand Rapids, Michigan, \$20,000 to develop messages promoting sports equity for girls in Michigan

Capacity Building

Freedom House Ministries, Grand Rapids, Michigan, \$4,000 for technology support

West Michigan Academy of Music for Girls, Grand Rapids, Michigan, \$45,000 over two years in support of fund development staff and training

Celebrating Women

Grand Rapids Women's Chorus, Grand Rapids, Michigan, \$2,000 for the production of a concert and reception honoring breast cancer survivors

GVSU Women's Center, Grand Rapids, Michigan, \$2,500 in support of *The Vagina Monologues*

Women's Studies Council of West Michigan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, \$120,000 over three years to underwrite the Nokomis Lecture Series

Economic Self-Sufficiency

Hispanic Center of Western Michigan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, \$16,155 for *Mujeres Unidas Sin Fronteras* (Women United Without Borders)

Legal Services of Southern Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, \$5,000 for the Farmworker Legal Services program

New York Women's Foundation, New York, New York, \$10,000 for the Women's Disaster Relief Fund supporting women-serving organizations displaced by the events of September 11
Women's Resource Center, Grand Rapids, Michigan, \$45,500 over two years for the Workplace Initiative program

Girls

Grand Rapids Girls' School, Grand Rapids, Michigan, \$5,000 for student population expansion efforts

Henry Paideia Academy, Grand Rapids, Michigan, \$2,500 for girls' programming at Henry School
Hispanic Center of Western Michigan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, \$2,000 for the high school girls' dance project

Society of Manufacturing Engineers Education Foundation (SME), Dearborn, Michigan, \$60,000 over three years for expansion of the STEPS program in West Michigan (Science, Technology & Engineering Preview Summer Camp for Girls)

Health

Center for Women in Transition, Holland, Michigan, \$60,000 over three years for the Lakeshore SANE (Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner) program

Grand Rapids REACH, Inc., Grand Rapids, Michigan, \$4,500 for a community awareness HIV/AIDS program

Michigan AIDS Fund, Southfield, Michigan, \$2,000 for a statewide, pooled funding resource

Weed & Seed, Grand Rapids, Michigan, \$4,000 for the Westside Women in Transition program

Planned Parenthood Centers of West Michigan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, \$133,000 over three years for an initiative designed to build grassroots community support and increase the agency's visibility grant

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Gender Matters: Understanding September 11

In the days immediately following September 11 the American public was exposed to many unfamiliar words and phrases. Taliban. Burqa. Gender apartheid. Jihad. These words, however, were not new to feminists and feminist organizations. Thanks to the Feminist Majority Foundation and their campaign to fight gender apartheid in Afghanistan (launched in 1997 – immediately following the Taliban's rise to power), feminists knew that women had been banished from the Afghanistan work force. We knew that schools and universities in Afghanistan were closed to women and girls. We knew that women in Afghanistan were prohibited from leaving their homes unless accompanied by close male relatives. We knew women were being publicly executed for breaking Taliban law. We knew about the burqa.

We were outraged at the treatment of our sisters in Afghanistan – and we were disturbed because we understood the greater implications of society's acceptance of violence against women. But we weren't prepared for what happened on September 11.

Shouldn't we, as a nation, have had a clue based on the treatment of women in Afghanistan? Shouldn't we have known that a society with no regard for women's human rights – a society where violence against women was accepted and encouraged – would be a society capable of other unthinkable acts of violence? Did our collective neglect of the treatment of women in Afghanistan contribute to the events of September 11?

In a recent article published by the Institute for Women's Policy Research, Amy Caiazza tells us "Societies that condone and even promote violence against women have shown over and over again that they tend to be violent in other ways as well." Studies show the inextricable link between violence against women and other types of violence – demonstrating that men who beat, rape, and kill women are more inclined to use violence as a means of achieving other goals. In Afghanistan,

where women were subject to daily terrorism, violence was an official and acceptable strategy for attaining political, social, and economic power.

It seems that we, as a nation, need to pay closer attention to women's human rights around the globe. How can we counteract terrorism and encourage more peaceful and democratic political systems if we are not working for women's human rights? If violence against women is accepted and ignored, can a society experience peace? If women continue to be terrorized in their own countries, if they are powerless and voiceless, can we really address the root causes of terrorism? Amy Caiazza suggests the United States should "look at both the victims and perpetrators of violence and terrorism. We should pay particularly close attention to the work of those who are effective opponents of violence against women. By doing so, we are more likely to address the root causes of terrorism and violence at home and in the wider world."

It is time for the United States to adopt an international policy that explicitly opposes violence against women and the regimes that condone it. While violence against women exists (directly or indirectly) in virtually every country, we should not consider it "incidental to other forms of violence." When countries are marked by political violence, violence against women is usually rampant. By opening our eyes to violence against women around the globe perhaps we will be able to avoid another September 11.

Caiazza, Amy. Why Gender Matters in Understanding September 11: Women, Militarism, and Violence. Institute for Women's Policy Research, publication # 1908, November 2001.

[Click here to download a copy of this article.](#)

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Taking Flight: Grants for Girls

During 2001 the Nokomis Foundation introduced a new grantmaking initiative — Taking Flight: Grants for Girls. By creating a separate grantmaking program for girls, we can ensure ongoing, concentrated support for girls in our community. This initiative will also strengthen our Taking Flight partner organizations as they meet together for networking and technical assistance sessions. The structure of the Taking Flight program also supports young women interested in philanthropy—with interns coordinating the Taking Flight grantmaking process. In 2001, Katie Bode-Lang, our intern from Hope College, managed the Taking Flight program with the assistance of Anna Floch, our high school intern from Holland High School.

We awarded the following Taking Flight grants in 2001:

Center for Women in Transition, Holland, \$25,000 for the Girls on the Run program

Family Planning & Women's Health of Allegan County, Allegan, \$6,500 for the Horizon Club program

Family Talk, Grand Rapids, \$10,000 for the Girl Talk program

Girl Scouts of Michigan Trails, Grand Rapids, \$17,500 for the PAVE Initiative (Project Anti-Education)

Godfrey-Lee Alternative Education, Wyoming, \$5,500 for the New Directions program for girls

Planned Parenthood Centers of West Michigan, Grand Rapids, \$7,790 for the Safe Girls project

Restorers, Inc., Grand Rapids, \$12,000 for Young Women United

United Methodist Community House, Grand Rapids, \$20,500 for the ISEE program (Individual Support, Encouragement, & Empowerment)

[Click here](#) for details about the 2002 *Taking Flight Grants for Girls*.

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Project Update: Prostitution Round Table

The New Voices Initiative

The Prostitution Round Table: A Community Learning Venture

By Dotti Clune and Jeannie Hosey

Two years ago we launched a new venture, the *New Voices Initiative*. *New Voices* is an effort to gain a better understanding of women and girls who are marginalized in our community – whose voices are usually unsolicited, unheard or ignored. The first project of the *New Voices Initiative* is the Prostitution Round Table, which aims to help women and girls involved in street prostitution in Grand Rapids make positive choices for their lives.

Prostituted women and girls are a nearly invisible population in our community. We hear about them primarily through news coverage – when a prostituted woman is murdered, for example, or when police stings are carried out in response to neighborhood concerns. We have few opportunities to see prostituted women as mothers, daughters, partners, friends – real people whose life circumstances have created vulnerability to exploitation. And we have few venues for examining whether and how our community could more effectively support their health and well-being.

Our work on this project has focused on facilitating a learning process designed to enable community organizations to more effectively address both the needs of prostituted women and the issues surrounding prostitution. This process has involved a broad spectrum of community members in a collective learning process, with participants providing information and expertise, offering feedback, engaging in consensus-building, and instigating community change.

Although the Prostitution Round Table is a work in process, the project has exceeded our expectations in several ways. We are heartened by the recognition that prostitution is a significant issue in our community, as evidenced by the fact that more than 35 community organizations are involved in the project. We have also been gratified by the level of commitment participating members have made to the issue.

In addition to attending monthly meetings, PRT participants have read volumes of background materials, shared their insights and learning with others, and initiated the idea of going beyond the original commitment to a nine-month project. The most exciting impacts of the project are the changes in perspectives reported by PRT members, their willingness to apply this learning in their work, and the organizational/programmatic changes that are taking place throughout the community as a result.

In the months ahead, the Prostitution Round Table is taking two big steps to cascade the learning to the Grand Rapids community at large:

- Publication of *We Can Do Better: Helping Prostituted Women and Girls in Grand Rapids Make Healthy Choices*. This 80+ page report aims to reframe the issue of prostitution in our community as a foundation for effectively helping prostituted women and girls make healthy

choices. [Click here](#) for more information.

- Sponsorship of the *Prostitution: Reframing Issues, Making Connections* conference on April 12, 2002 at Grand Valley State University's DeVos Center. This day-long conference, open to the entire community, will include presentations by survivors of prostitution and pioneers in helping prostituted women and girls make healthy choices. [Click here](#) for more information.

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Did you Know?

- Before the Taliban seized control of Afghanistan in 1996, over half of the students and 60% of the teachers at Kabul University were women, and 70% of schoolteachers, 50% of civilian government workers, and 40% of health care workers in Kabul were women. (Feminist Majority Foundation)
- The literacy rate in Afghanistan is 33% for men, and 13% for women. (UN Population Fund)
- Afghanistan is the second most heavily land mined nation in the world (Cambodia is first), with 10 million mines still in the ground. Women and children are the chief victims of land mines in Afghanistan. (CARE)
- The life expectancy is 44 years for Afghan women, 43 years for men. (UN Population Fund)
- Afghan infant mortality is 152 per 1,000 live births. A stunning one-quarter of all Afghan children die before they are five years old. (UN Population Fund)
- About 70% of Afghanistan's people are undernourished, and only 13% have access to treated, safe water. (United Nations)
- Before September 11, relief agencies were feeding an estimated 3.8 million people. Now, one in four Afghans is at risk of starvation. (Oxfam International)

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In the Spotlight

We welcome the following members of the Nokomis Foundation Grant Committee:

Katie Bode-Lang, Delvenia Daniels Beason, Patricia Gardner, Kay Griffith Hammond, Julie Guevara, L'Tanya Haith Ojo, Kevin O'Neill, Susan Shannon, and Mary Alice Williams, chair

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Save the Date

Friday, April 12

8:30 am—4:30 pm

Prostitution: Reframing Issues, Making Connections Conference

co-sponsored by the Nokomis Foundation and the GVSU School of Social Work

[Click here](#) for more information.

Monday, April 1
Time and location TBA
Lani Guinier
Part of the Nokomis Lecture Series of the Womens' Studies Council

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Reach Us

Need to contact us?

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