

MARIANNE JONES
FINAL

Good afternoon! I'm Marianne Jones and I was the executive director of the Women's Fund for 11 years.

I'm especially proud and honored to be sharing this stage today with so many pioneering women, and to be in the company of the amazing women and men who have joined us in the audience. Thank you!

Back in 2004, the Women's Fund, along with women leaders at the NH Charitable Foundation and the United Way, started this event to celebrate women's leadership and our power to build community in NH--that's where the name came from. How wonderful that over the years, this luncheon has grown to become a must-attend event for anyone involved in issues to advance women and girls, and in our collective belief in the power of women coming together to make change.

When the Women's Fund was founded in the late 1990's, women were still being left out of philanthropy decisions and discouraged from seeking leadership positions. The glass ceiling was very real in so many ways.

The New Hampshire Women's Fund grew into an organization of pioneering women who believed that women's philanthropy and women's leadership matters. Many of those women are in the room with us today – and on behalf of everyone here, I want to thank you for leading the way!

Would all of the Founders of The Women's Fund please stand and be recognized? *PAUSE--after applause, continue:*

By the time that I came along – in 2003 – the Women's Fund had established a strong reputation for grantmaking targeted to organizations advancing women and girls.

Since 1999, the Fund, and now Foundation, has invested nearly \$2 million in dozens of organizations who believe that one sure way to make lasting change is to first invest in the women and girls of the Granite State.

We've advanced programs that support the economic prospects of homeless women, empowered middle school girls through the arts, supported mentors for girls at risk and most recently supported the creation of a furniture-making vocational program at the Women's Prison.

This is the kind of innovative and female-focused investment that is needed to keep pushing for change for women and girls. For years, people asked us what ARE the issues facing women and girls? We recognized the importance of using research to inform our grantmaking and education activities.

In 2011, we partnered with the NH Women's Policy Institute and together we produced the first comprehensive report on the Status of Women and Girls in NH, finally helping to answer those queries. This was the advent of the wonderful research portfolio that continues today at the NH Women's Foundation and has expanded to include the Gender Matters issue briefs.

It's a familiar phrase among all of us in this room today to say "Want to make real change? Invest in women and girls first."

How lucky we were that the Women's Fund founders knew this all along!

Thank you for inviting me here today. I am so honored and proud to stand with you and celebrate the work of these two great organizations and the women who had the courage and vision to make a difference!