



VOICES OF HOPE

Cracking the code on some complex issues

CONCLUSIONS FROM A **2016 RESEARCH PROJECT**
OF THE WOMEN'S GIVING ALLIANCE

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WOMEN'S GIVING
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THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION



VOICES OF HOPE:

Cracking the code on some complex issues

HINT: The solutions are complex, too.

Drawing conclusions from our third major research project in the 15-year history of Women's Giving Alliance, we make the case here for four critical, achievable goals that we believe offer sustainable improvement for the lives of women and girls in Northeast Florida:



Break the Cycle of Female Poverty

A comprehensive approach encompasses education, job skills, budgeting, health, childcare and more.



Educate Girls for Economic Success

Stimulating early interest in science, technology, engineering and math leads to education choices that, in turn, lead to in-demand careers with high pay.



Provide Trauma-Informed Addiction Therapy

Successful recovery requires attention to both the substance abuse and to the trauma that is often the underlying cause.



Address Girls' Reproductive Health

Preventing unwanted pregnancy and STDs is key to a better future.

In each case, models exist for success. The models have in common taking an integrated approach to making change. The challenge is finding ways to scale these proven solutions to match the community's needs. All the models can be replicated or refined by additional service providers. All provide important opportunities for community investment.

These goals are drawn from extensive research on the status of women and girls and the issues affecting them. The research is presented in detail – with links to original sources – on our website, wganeffl.org, where the underlying data is organized according to our four broad fields of interest:



Educational Attainment



Physical and Mental Health



Economic Empowerment



Safety and Justice

Our four goals were selected based on these criteria:

- Local or national models of success can guide effective change.
- Some baseline data exist to help measure results.
- The issue, like poverty, involves more than one of our fields of interest.

- Progress would have multiple impacts; for example, reducing teen pregnancy impacts educational attainment, economic empowerment and physical and mental health of women.

WGA's commitment to grantmaking based on research is fundamental to our mission:

To inspire the women of Northeast Florida to be strategic philanthropists and to improve the lives of women and girls through collective giving.



Only by first identifying current issues, finding best practices here and elsewhere, and outlining potentially effective steps forward can we craft grantmaking strategies to have the impact we seek.

After discussion among our members, WGA will choose to focus our grantmaking on one of these goals, beginning with 2017 grants. But true progress depends on comprehensive community action and investment on all four fronts.

We hope our work will inform and inspire the policy and funding decisions of others: public officials, educators, the business and non-profit sectors and other philanthropic funders. We invite all to dive deeply into the research on our website and investigate the models for success.



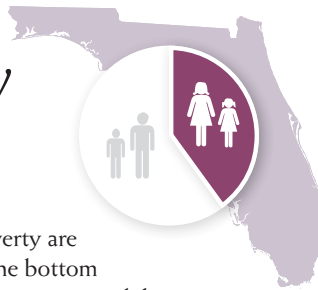
Previous WGA research reports – *Voices Heard: The Status of Women and Girls in 21st Century Northeast Florida* (2004) and *Stronger Voices... Better Lives: Moving Women and Girls Forward* (2012) – are available on the website, wganeffl.org.



WOMEN'S GIVING ALLIANCE
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BREAK THE CYCLE of Female Poverty



In Florida, 40 percent of families with children living in poverty are female-headed households. And children who grow up in the bottom fifth of national family income are more likely to remain in poverty as adults.

Nationally and locally, programs that show promise of breaking the cycle have demonstrated that a focus on just one problem facing these women is not enough to achieve lasting success. It takes a comprehensive, integrated approach:

- The stress of poverty leads to mental and physical health issues that must be addressed.
- Adequate education and job training are necessary for a woman to get a job.
- She needs child care and transportation to hold a job.
- She may need help breaking her isolation and learning to forge healthy relationships.
- The ability to manage money is a first step toward building economic stability.

Many of the strategies needed to move women and their children out of poverty have implications for changes in:

- Public policy: The minimum wage and the availability of paid leave, health insurance, affordable housing, public transportation, child care.
- Business policies: Flexible work schedules, equitable wages, work/family benefits.

WHAT WORKS

- » Crittenton Women's Union, Boston: "The Bridge to Self-Sufficiency." Its techniques include "Mobility Mentors," a tool to help women "visually display, on one page, their most important items for moving out of poverty."
- » Family Foundations, Jacksonville: "1,000 in 1,000: Moving 1,000 People Out of Poverty Every 1,000 Days." In addition to its focus on building key assets (social, human, financial), it has identified some "unrecognized causes of poverty" for early attention like unpaid traffic tickets, bad checks and student loans.
- » Beaches Emergency Assistance Ministry, Jacksonville Beach: Single Parent Project, inspired by a program at the Sister Carmen Community Center in Lafayette, CO, which collaborates with a Boulder County initiative, "Bridges Out of Poverty." BEAM recruits single mothers for a two- to three-year commitment and provides comprehensive services and case management. Each participant sets her own goals; common ones involve housing, credit repair/debt reduction, education, health, employment, parenting, budgeting, transportation.



Finding Stability

Jenifer Cooley, 26, is raising her daughter, Nicky, 8, and her niece, Tera, 17.

"I grew up with nothing. I don't want that for my daughter," she said. **"I'll do what they tell me"** to get ahead.

She stayed in school, got a high school diploma and an A.A. degree, had a job at \$11.50 an hour, but still she struggled. **"I'd flip out with anxiety when a bill came in."**

She followed advice and got a house in Mayport through Beaches Habitat for Humanity. Someone at Habitat told her about the Single Parent Program at BEAM. She applied right away.

About the same time, she got a new job at \$14 an hour, with health insurance. **"I went to the doctor for the first time since childbirth."**

At BEAM, she learned about budgeting and saving. When her car was totaled last fall, she could manage a replacement. **"I feel stable for the first time,"** she said.

Parenting classes and family counseling have helped her **"stay calm. It's not good for the girls to see me panic."**

Jenifer said, **"I'm so confident within myself now.... I'm going to be successful supporting myself and my child. Since I've been in the program, it's the best year of my life."**



Studying the Sky and Beyond

Melanie Wondracek, 11, has some reading habits not typical of pre-teen girls, like *Astronomy* magazine.

For a sixth-grader, she has a remarkably clear view of her future: She wants to **“study the sky”** first at the University of Alabama in Huntsville for its space science focus. Then she will be an astronomer and science teacher.

Melanie has always liked math and science. She participates in a Lego Robotics competition. She enjoys the lab work in science class at the Duval Charter School at Baymeadows. And she is a very good student, getting the top score, 5, on her FCAT science test.

But it was a Girl Scout program led by Ted Trieber, an amateur astronomer, that fired her imagination and ambition – just as the Girl Scout curriculum intended.

Melanie said it was back in fourth grade, when her troop first went to camp to peer into the sky, that she was spurred to know more about **“other things that exist out there.”**

“Mr. Ted makes astronomy interesting,” she said. **“He relates it to things I like, like mythology.”** And hands-on activities like dry-ice comets make it fun, **“never like work... never boring.”**

The excitement of learning by doing has focused her goals for college and career.

EDUCATE GIRLS for Economic Success



The gender gap in wages is well known. Its causes are complex. They include discrimination – paying women less for the same work – but also the clustering of women in jobs that pay less.

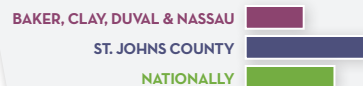


That clustering begins early. Locally, students preparing for jobs in the traditionally low-wage service sector are 70 to 80 percent female, while students in the higher wage so-called STEM sector (science, technology, engineering, math) are less than 20 percent female.

To close the wage gap by the time they are adults, girls need encouragement from parents, teachers and advisors plus the opportunity to prepare for high wage jobs. The growing demand for STEM jobs creates an especially good opportunity. First the local educational profile must change:

- **Girls' math proficiency drops significantly from 4th to 8th grades.**
- **Baker, Clay, Duval and Nassau lag behind the 28.8 percent national average of women with a college degree or higher. St. Johns is above average, 40.2 percent.**
- **Women's current enrollment at Jacksonville University and the University of North Florida in STEM fields is even lower than the national rate of 20 percent. It ranges from 4 percent to 17 percent in several engineering and computer majors.**

WOMEN WITH COLLEGE DEGREES:



Research by the Girl Scouts, Inc., and the American Association of University Women offers these insights:

- **Girls and women make a priority of their desire to “change the world/help people” and need help seeing how STEM jobs fit their goals.**
- **Girls who are keen to pursue science, math and computing have in common very high levels of self-confidence.**
- **Access to women who work in STEM-related jobs is important, especially for women and girls of color.**
- **Girls often lose interest in science and math around 7th grade, when hands-on activities may give way to, as one said, “just book work and taking tests.” Teaching styles that match how girls learn best include designing, building, discovering, experimenting – “fun with a purpose.”**

WHAT WORKS

- » **Girl Scouts, Inc.**, has robust programs on topics like astronomy with a NASA-certified educator; wind energy and innovation in partnership with Siemens, an engineering company; “It’s Your Planet, Love It” on air and water.
- » **Black Girls Code**, a non-profit with chapters in the U.S. (none in Florida) and South Africa, educates African-American girls ages 7-17 in “all things tech” – writing code, building websites, robotics, mobile apps.
- » **Harvey Mudd College**, Claremont, CA, using insights like those in the research above, in five years increased women graduates in computing from 12 to 40 percent.

“I’m still in my cocoon.
I’m not a butterfly yet.”

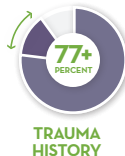


PROVIDE TRAUMA-INFORMED Addiction Therapy



Research shows that people who have experienced trauma have greater difficulty maintaining sobriety and increased difficulty in healing from traumatic memories. The impact of not identifying and treating this combination of needs is particularly evident in looking at the profile of women in the justice system.

- Nationally and in Florida, two thirds or more of women in prison are there for nonviolent crimes — primarily drug-related.
- 77-90 percent of women in prison have experienced trauma (emotional, physical and sexual abuse).
- 80 percent of women in prison have a substance addiction.
- Few prisons in the nation offer trauma-informed addiction therapy during incarceration or in a re-entry program.
- The experience of incarceration often serves to re-traumatize females.



A similar pattern of trauma and addiction occurs among:

- Girls involved in the justice system
- Women veterans
- Women and girls who have experienced homelessness
- LGBT persons

WHAT WORKS

Effective, evidence-based approaches address trauma and substance addiction together. Two are:

- » “Seeking Safety.” A model that has been implemented internationally, it integrates safe coping skills for both trauma and addiction.
- » SPARCS (Structured Psychotherapy for Adolescents Responding to Chronic Stress). Group intervention addresses the needs of chronically traumatized adolescents who may still be living with stress and are experiencing problems in several areas of functioning.

Locally, those programs and others are in use, but a shortage of trained professionals limits the number of patients served.

- » Women’s Services Coalition offers briefings and training sessions on these and other evidence-based approaches to co-occurring trauma and addiction.
- » Gateway Community Services uses both “Seeking Safety” and SPARCS in its work and is training additional therapists.



Breaking Out of Her Past

The facts of Victoria Miller’s adult life are raw. She was a stripper. Single, she had children twice with different men. She was a pass-out-drunk alcoholic. Those were the “**ugly caterpillar**” days, she said.

Her back story is even harsher. Her father began sexually abusing her when she was 8 years old. The first time, “**I went away in my own head,**” she said. At 9 she began drinking from the liquor cabinet on her dad’s boat. “**That liquid would make me numb.**”

Now 32 and sober since June, Victoria has started college, planning to be a nurse. She dotes on her year-old twin daughters, who are with her, and often sees her 8-year-old daughter, whose father has custody. She is determined this time “**to be the mother, wife, person my God means me to be.**”

“**I’m still in my cocoon,**” she said. “**I’m not a butterfly yet.**”

That cocoon is Gateway Community Services, where she and the twins have lived since June. In its Seeking Safety program, she has learned coping skills for both trauma and addiction. No one knows better than Victoria how close that link is.

At 14, she told her mother about the abuse. Her father was sent to prison. Later she found herself dating alcoholic, abusive men “**just like my dad... I needed alcohol just to get through the day.**”

This is Victoria’s third try at rehab, the second at Gateway. “**Four years ago... I wasn’t putting in the effort.**” Still, she said, she made some changes then. “**I didn’t go back to the bars.**” But she did return to alcohol.

This time, “**I was ready to take every bit of the help... I’ve done my steps. I’ve done my amends,**” in the AA 12-step program. This time, “**I knew it would change my life.**”

The difference, she said, is those two babies who are totally dependent on her. And her mother, who “**made me see I had to change. I can’t ever thank her enough.**” And the vision, inspired at Gateway, of that butterfly she wants to be.



Learning Healthy Relationships

Rhadisha Scurry, now 19 and a freshman at Florida A&M University, went to a workshop on sex education for teens **“out of curiosity.”**

She stuck with Healthy Start’s 4Me Teen Health Project for six months because she was hearing **“the truth straight up,”** as she put it, and it wasn’t exactly what she had heard from her friends. Also, a stipend for completing the program was a lure.

Her mother, Lay Mobley, saw value in her daughter learning the facts from a responsible adult – one who had more credibility with a teen than parents do, she said with a laugh.

At 18, Rhadisha was a little older than most participants. Still she felt she learned a lot. Videos **“made it real,”** she said, and she liked the role-playing in scenarios with scripts written by the teens themselves. She said the parts about healthy relationships were especially important for the younger girls.

Rhadisha said she enjoys helping others by sharing the solid information she learned and setting straight some of the unreliable stories teens tell each other.

The knowledge and relationship skills she gained have meant no detours from her path to college and beyond.

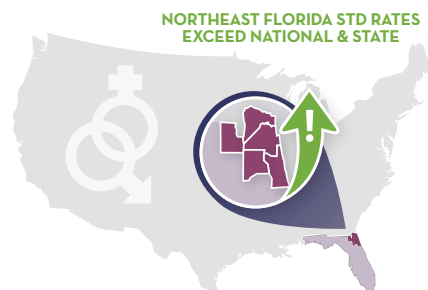
EXPAND GIRLS’ ACCESS to Reproductive Health Care



Teenage pregnancy correlates with babies who are premature and underweight and with mothers who get stuck in poverty.

While the national and overall local rates of teen births have declined, several local realities show work is still needed to reduce teen pregnancy and improve access to adolescent health resources:

- One third of teens who gave birth in 2014 live in the 11 local zip codes with the highest poverty rates.
- The Northeast Florida rates of sexually transmitted diseases, particularly among females ages 15-19, exceed the national and state rates.
- The Youth Risk Behavior Survey shows that more than 40 percent of Florida and Duval County teens are sexually active with many participating in risky behavior like sex with multiple partners and sex before the age of 13.
- About 50 percent of girls aging out of the child welfare system are pregnant.



GIRLS AGING OUT OF CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

WHAT WORKS

Effective programs exist. The challenge is finding sustainable levels of funding.

- » **Healthy Start of Northeast Florida** works with community agencies on strategies like programs for parents of teens; reaching youth with evidence-based sex-education; improving access to adolescent health care, and programs to reduce repeat pregnancies.
- » **4Me Teen Health Project** is an evidence-based comprehensive sex education program offered in Clay, Duval and Nassau counties by Healthy Start.
- » Adolescent health clinics and other programs address specific needs of young women related to reproductive health, mental health and relationship abuse. Among them:
 - JASMYN for LGBT youth
 - PACE Center for Girls
 - Florida Department of Health
 - » Two clinics in Clay and several in Duval’s Full Service Schools
 - » Peer Advocate Program, for STD/HIV screenings and family planning information.
- » **Healthy Choices** offers information on abstinence and safe sex and addresses the broader need to build confidence about life options.
- » Programs in Denver and Oakland offer models for school-based centers in high-risk schools. They provide health education and clinical services.

DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS:

Snapshots and trends

Population characteristics and family structures are changing. The evolving status of women and girls touches all of WGA's four fields of interest and affects the resources needed to improve their lives. WGA's research points to these key issues:



FAMILY – *More varied than ever*

- Reflecting a national trend, fewer than 50 percent of children in Northeast Florida live at home with two married, heterosexual parents.
- Households headed by a single mother range from a low of 14 percent in St. Johns County to a high of 25 percent in Duval County. Of concern is the significantly higher poverty rate of those households versus married-couple headed families.
- About 32 percent of same-sex couples in Jacksonville are raising children.
- Access to safe, affordable childcare is a major challenge. Costs range from \$4,000 to \$8,300 annually, depending on the age of the child.
- While men have increased the scope of their family responsibilities, the primary responsibility for daily care of children falls to women.
- The United States ranks low globally for its policies on work-life balance. Only 12 percent of U.S. private sector workers have access to paid family leave.

AGE – *The “silver tsunami” builds*

- All Northeast Florida counties except Baker have experienced significant growth in people 65 years and older.
- Women 65 and older in Nassau and St. Johns counties (20 and 19 percent respectively) exceed the national average for ALL adults 65 and older (15 percent). This age cohort will continue to grow nationally and locally.
- AARP's “Livability Index” measuring quality of life elements for older adults shows low scores for Northeast Florida counties, from 46 to 49 points of 100.
- Female family members provide the majority of elder care and many of these caregivers also are employed full- or part-time.

DIVERSITY – *Understanding differences*

- Northeast Florida continues to be less racially and ethnically diverse than Florida or the U.S. For example, in Florida Hispanics are 21 percent of the total female population but 8 percent in Northeast Florida counties.
- In Northeast Florida, as elsewhere, on quality of life measures like education, income, health and others, non-white populations place lower. The challenge remains to show progress on those measures.
- In the LGBT population, youth have increased likelihood of experiencing bullying and violence; elders face both the usual problems of aging plus the potential for greater isolation, and all age groups are at risk for mental health issues like depression and substance abuse.
- For the LGBT population, the size and composition is difficult to determine, but reliable sources provide some perspectives: 3.4 percent of Florida adults in a 2012 poll identified as LGBT; 10 percent of Duval County high school students identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual; as many as 23,000 LGBT elders live in Northeast Florida.
- The foreign-born and refugee populations in Northeast Florida, while a smaller portion than in the state, are growing and expected to grow further.
- Girl-serving agencies report an increase in both the number of foreign-born and refugee girls they serve and also those girls' challenges of assimilation.

Note: Here and elsewhere in this report, Northeast Florida refers to Baker, Clay, Duval, Nassau and St. Johns counties.

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Visit wganefl.org/research for more information



and the sources for this 2016 research project.

Women together... changing lives

The Women's Giving Alliance, an initiative of The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida, is a dynamic group of diverse women who pool their philanthropic giving to make a lasting impact on the lives of women and girls in Northeast Florida. Since 2001, WGA has made grants totaling more than \$4.5 million to more than 30 non-profit organizations. The Jay and Deanie Stein Unrestricted Fund at The Community Foundation generously underwrote this WGA research and publication.



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