

HP women part of a citywide ‘impact’

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Laura Sherman’s enthusiasm for Impact 100 Chicago is unmistakable.

“Impact 100 Chicago recognizes that there are many organizations doing important work improving the lives of underserved individuals and communities in the Chicago area,” said Sherman, of Highland Park.

The Chicago chapter for Impact 100 gives grants on an annual basis to nonprofits around the city. The first year of the Chicago chapter of Impact 100 Chicago there were 112 members. There now are two chapters — a suburban one and the Chicago chapter.

There currently are about 600 members, 45 of whom live in Highland Park.

The Chicago chapter awarded \$100,000 grants to Chicago Women in trades, Family Rescue, Refugee One and Tutoring Chicago. AcciÒn, Chicago Debate Commission and One Million Degrees were awarded \$5,000 grants.

The suburban chapter gave \$100,000 grants to Community Crisis Center and Inspiration Corporation and \$5,000 to Juvenile Protection Association and New Moms.

“Consistent with our mission, we pool our funds and give high-impact grants of \$100,000 that will have a transformational effect on the receiving organizations and the populations of the communities they serve,” Sherman said.

Sherman is one of the founding members of the Chicago Chapter, which began operation about six years ago.

Not every nonprofit organization is eligible to participate in applying for a grant. There are certain criteria each group must meet.

“The nonprofits from which we solicit proposals must be thriving and growing and have had 501(c)(3) status for at least three years,” she said. “Most of them have annual operating budgets of \$300,000 to \$8 million.

“We accept applications that propose a new project or program, or expand or continue to support an existing and proven program,” Sherman said. “Projects may include capital expenditures or improvements, funding of program expenses, or a combination thereof.

The organization accepts applications in five focus areas: culture, education, family, health and sustainability.

Nonprofits that operate in the greater Chicagoland area — Cook, Lake, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Grundy, Will and McHenry in the state of Illinois are eligible to apply for an Impact 100 Chicago grant.

“All grant monies must be used for the proposed project or program that provides services to people who live in these geographic areas,” Sherman said.

Sherman added another good thing about Impact 100 Chicago is that it connects you with the community, its problems and possible solutions.

“The people who are running these nonprofits are tireless warriors,” she said. “They are addressing some of the saddest problems. It is hard not to be compassionate about what they often are facing every day.”

Some of the Impact 100 Chicago members become personally involved with the nonprofit organizations.

Sherman related how one of its members ultimately adopted a refugee family, one of whom was suffering a form of post-traumatic stress syndrome — a result of some of the horrors they faced before arriving in the U.S.

Another learned about homeless teens attending an area high school.

“She discovered there were 13 students who had virtually nothing,” Sherman said. “The member personally bought backpacks for each of them and filled them with items most teenagers possess these days.”

In 2015, 225 nonprofit organizations applied for grants. Six received them and two were the recipients of merit grants, money left over from the initial donations of members after the \$100,000 grants are awarded.

“The projects which we have funded changed but the need has not,” Sherman said. “The need in the communities continues to grow especially with budget cuts and the stalemate in Springfield.”

Sherman is a member of the executive board and holds the official title of Nonprofit Outreach Chair, but has no problem working on another project for the group that may come her way.

“It is a very robust job,” she said. “Sharing the journey with other connected women from all over the area — Chicago and suburbs — is gratifying and fulfilling. I have met many wonderful people and learned so much from them.”

