



MEMBER NEWS

Connecting women who care with causes that matter.

In This Issue

[Tornado Relief](#)

[COVID-19 Plans](#)

[2020 Grant Recipients](#)

[Membership Renewal](#)

[Member Spotlight](#)

[Advisory Board](#)

[Meetings](#)

[Newsletter](#)

[Submissions](#)

Advisory Board Members

Rhonda Willis
Chair

Glenda (Rusty) Belote

Kari Foy

Peggy Grill

Latoya Robinson

Sharon Shealy

Becky Young

May 2020

Message From Our Chair

Dear PEARLS Family and all of Hampton County,

2020 has been a year of challenges for our world, our nation, our state and our country. Never in our imaginations did we anticipate in January that in three months our country's businesses, schools and stadiums would be closed. We did not imagine that a virus would confine people to their homes. Beyond the Coronavirus, we never imagined that an EF-4 tornado would ravage sections of Hampton County communities, leaving destruction in its path and taking the lives of five of our citizens. Never did we imagine that so many would go to bed one night and by the next morning everything they owned, including their homes, would be swept away. Never did we imagine how the new decade would change our lives in such a brief period.

2020 has ushered in a new set of challenges, but in the process of facing those challenges, Hampton County citizens have grown resilient, as the slogan has reminded us: "Hampton County Strong." With the difficulties, our citizens have not thrown up their hands in despair. Instead, they have reset their priorities and embraced what is valuable. They have risen to a new level of appreciation for faith, family, friends and those who work on the front lines. They have regained the joy of spending time together and what it means to help a neighbor. The busyness of life had previously stolen so much of what is truly important in so many ways. Despite social distancing, neighbors helping neighbors have gained their strength through embracing the opportunities to give to each other. PEARLS' January newsletter, most prophetically, stated that together we "make Hampton County a stronger community and a better place to live" not knowing what we would face shortly in the days ahead. Anyone living here has witnessed that. Walt Disney

once said, "The flower that blooms in adversity is the rarest and most beautiful one of all." Hampton County citizens are growing a beautiful flower garden.

The PEARLS board has actively worked to help grow this community garden. Since the COVID-19 quarantine began, board members have served with others on a multi-county committee organized by Community Foundation of the Lowcountry to provide relief funding to nonprofits and churches working nonstop to provide food, medicine and/or shelter to those most impacted by the virus. Thousands of dollars have supported and will continue to support Hampton County organizations directly involved in relief efforts.

Then came the tornado. The PEARLS board again has risen to the occasion to help. I took a drive not long after it hit our area, visiting several of the families. Having 38 years in education, these victims were my friends. Their children grew up with my children. I had been in their homes, taught them or their children, shared meals with them, visited their churches and worked with them. Not able to imagine what I was about to see, my heart dropped in my chest as I entered the area.

In the days that followed, the PEARLS Board embraced the PEARLS' motto, "Connecting Women Who Care with Causes That Matter," in a new way. We searched for ways to make a difference. Our sister organization in Beaufort County, Women in Philanthropy (WIP), joined us in our relief effort by collecting needed items for victims and establishing a Tornado Relief Fund through Community Foundation of the Lowcountry. The pictures shared with you in this publication encapsulate the bonding between WIP sisters and PEARLS sisters when they met recently. Their loving concern for our citizens and willingness to help have formed a bond among sisters in our two organizations will continue in the months and years ahead.

The PEARLS Board commends all Hampton citizens who have been actively involved in helping others. We recognize the selfless frontline workers whose work never ends. We also recognize PEARLS members who have worked to help others and represent the beating heart of the organization. In closing, if anyone reading this is aware of needs that PEARLS can support, please reach out to one of our Board members listed below. As stated in our last newsletter, it is all of Hampton County's "hearts of grace" and "souls generated by love" that make us "Hampton County Strong" not only now but always.



Continue to take care,

Rhonda

Rhonda Willis,
PEARLS Chair

And all your PEARLS Board Members:

*Rusty Belote, Kari Foy, Peggy Grill,
LaToya Robinson, Sharon Sealy and*

WIP - PEARLS Tornado Relief

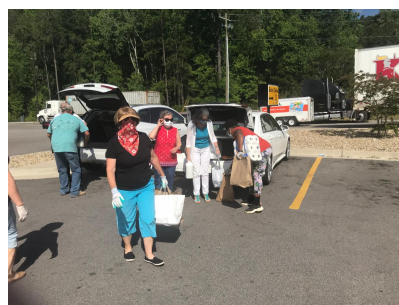
Sisters Helping Sisters

Our sister women's giving circle in Beaufort County, Women in Philanthropy (WIP), joined forces with us to provide relief to those in Hampton County who were impacted by the tornado. The WIP members provided donations that included toiletries, cleaning supplies, bedding and more. Additionally, they raised \$3,000 in monetary donations! The PEARLS Advisory Board will be responsible for allocating all donations.

The pictures below are from May 16. WIP advisory board members, as well as Community Foundation staff, traveled to Hampton County to drop-off the goods. Here are some pictures from that wonderful event.



Both WIP and PEARLS Advisory Board Members were on hand to help out.





Some of the ladies' family members, as well as a couple of the Community Foundation staff, also pitched in to load donations into the trailer. As you see, everyone lent a hand, and the trailer was full - thousands of dollars worth of goods and supplies were donated!



WIP Chair Kathi Bateson handing over donations to PEARLS Chair Rhonda Willis



LEFT, BACK ROW: Daughter of LaToya Robinson; husband of Lesley Gilbert; Debbie Cahoon, Vice President for Community Investment at the Community Foundation; LaToya Robinson, PEARLS Advisory Board member; **LEFT, FRONT ROW:** Lesley Gilbert, WIP Advisory Board Member; Peggy Grill, PEARLS Advisory Board member **RIGHT, BACK ROW:** Rhonda Willis, Chair of PEARLS; Kari Foy, PEARLS Advisory Board member; Elizabeth Loda, Vice Chair of WIP; Kathi Bateson, Chair of WIP **RIGHT, FRONT ROW:** Margaret McManus, project coordinator and WIP Immediate Past Chair of WIP

Potential Areas for PEARLS to Help

PEARLS is working with local relief efforts on food, shelter and medical needs. Food and other needed items are being collected and provided to central distribution sites as materials are collected.

Among the items discussed were the challenges among families to manage at-home schooling responsibilities if the family does not have an available computer for the student to use.

After some discussion, it was agreed that the school system will be asked for information about computer needs among the students and that PEARLS would consider supplying computers as needed. It was noted that some of the PEARLS Girls may be in need of computer help. Rhonda Willis and LaToya Robinson will follow up with the school system.

Grant Awards

Here Are the 2020 PEARLS Grant Recipients

While we did not have the April annual meeting and missed the opportunity to see everyone, share an interesting presentation and munch on good food, PEARLS did complete the grant selection process and has made three awards to local groups. The presentation of the awards was not done before the usual audience and the groups did not receive the well-deserved applause that followed the awarding of the grants. However, they did receive their awards through a presentation from a Board member at one of their local meetings.

Grants this year were awarded to Hopeful Horizons, Second Helpings and Black Swamp Salkehatchie c/o United Methodist Church. All the awardees presented projects that serve the community and engage community members.

- \$3,000 to Black Swamp Salkehatchie c/o Hampton United Methodist Church for "Repairs in Hampton County"
- \$1800 to Second Helpings for "Healthy Food for Hampton County"
- \$3,000 to Hopeful Horizons for "Support for Victim/Survivors in Hampton County"

A fourth grant of \$1,700 was given from the Beth McNeer Scholarship Endowment Fund to Avery C. Thompson Community Center in loving memory of former PEARLS member Beth McNeer.

Membership Renewal

Send in Your Renewal by Mail

If you have renewed your membership in response to the recent mailing, Thank You! You may now ignore this!

Otherwise, if you have not yet renewed your membership, send your check while you're thinking about it. Because this year's annual meeting has been canceled, the check will need to be sent to:

Community Foundation of the Lowcountry
P.O. Box 23019
Hilton Head Island, SC 29925

**Note on your check that it is for a PEARLS annual membership.*

Member Spotlight

Spotlight on Jill Knight, a PEARLS Founding Member

It seems important to pause from time to time to consider how an organization like PEARLS was created and to recall the women who were among the founding members that made it successful. In coming issues, we will fondly recognize some of the founding and early members.

As a charter member of PEARLS, Jill Knight recalls the first night several years ago when a group met at the home of Peggy Parker to discuss how women as a group might give back to Hampton County. She noted that coming up with a name for the group resulted in a long discussion that eventually led to "Philanthropic Empowerment Among Lowcountry Sisters," better known today as PEARLS of Hampton County.

Discussing PEARLS, she noted the continuing need for involvement among the membership. Though there have been many reminders and encouragement to participate actively, many members pay their dues but only attend the Annual Meeting. Active membership, she feels, is important to the long-term success of the group. While the Annual Meeting provides inspiration and recognizes first-hand involvement by acknowledging and recognizing all the efforts to back and help citizens through its grants, it's important that PEARLS members become involved in meetings during the entire year. She adds, "What an opportunity NOW to come together and help those who are in need following this recent tornado and sickening viral pandemic."

Continuing with her thoughts about Hampton County, Jill notes, "I and many others know firsthand the struggles families have in raising successful, respectful, knowledgeable, healthy, hardworking children that make good choices." She goes on to describe the work being done through PEARLS Girls and its taskforce to provide opportunities for 18 young ladies and their mothers for learning and experiencing the opportunities and knowledge regarding school and post-high school choices. This program brought in the girls and adult family members at the elementary school level and continues working with them as they now experience high school and begin planning for the future. She recognized Peggy Parker and Community Foundation of the Lowcountry, which provided support and guidance for the PEARLS Girls program.

It is easy to understand why Jill Knight is a long-time, much-loved and influential member of the Hampton community!

PEARLS Advisory Board

Board Meeting Recap

The final meeting of the PEARLS 2019-2020 year was held this month on ZOOM and provided an opportunity for the group to meet together despite the cancellation of our meeting scheduled in Hampton. The online event worked well and allowed us to complete the year "together" ... but not together! Our next meeting dates for the 2020-2021 year are not yet scheduled but will be available in August.

PEARLS members are encouraged to attend the Board meetings at any time. Any members interested in serving on the Board of Directors should contact President Rhonda Willis for more information.

Newsletter Submissions

Do you have an idea for an upcoming newsletter?

To submit relevant items to be considered for this newsletter, send the information to Rusty Belote, PEARLS Newsletter Editor, at wmumsu73@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Rusty

Glenda (Rusty) Belote

PEARLS of Hampton County
is a fund of

