Looking Back, Looking Ahead:  
Q&A with Sue Ann Thompson on 20 years

Q: What are you most proud of as you look back at the last 20 years at the WWHF?

A: The program I’m most proud of is probably First Breath. As a former smoker myself, I know how hard it is to quit and stay quit. I’m so glad that we’ve been able to create a program that provides real help to women when it’s so critical that they are able to make changes. I’m proud of how much the program has grown, and proud to know that it’s continuing to evolve and improve every year. Anything we can do to help women quit smoking feels like a success to me!

Q: As you think back to the very early days after you founded the WWHF, what are some of your favorite memories?

A: I really loved the Women’s Health Roundtable events we did early on. It was bringing women’s health information to rural women in small towns, like where I grew up. In fact, we did a roundtable where I grew up! It was so rewarding to connect women with the latest, most accurate health information (at least it was at that time, 20 years ago). And we connected women to health services in their own community. In the early days of the internet, there was no easy online search to find services, so we made connections the old fashioned way.

Q: What are some of the major changes you’ve seen in the field of women’s health?

A: The most obvious change for me is that today Women’s Health is a recognized field of medicine. When we started down this path, we needed to convince people that women’s health was worth looking at. How women were included in clinical trials was just starting to change, and there were very few women in academic leadership positions. There’s still plenty of work to do on these fronts, but the field of women’s health has made such progress. When I speak to young physicians and researchers, I sometimes have to remind myself that I don’t need to convince them why women’s health is a priority – I’m preaching to the choir! It’s wonderful to see a generation of clinicians who value our field and want to continue to see it expand.

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2017 marks the 20th Anniversary of the Wisconsin Women's Health Foundation! For 20 years we have been on a journey to innovate, impact and improve women’s health in Wisconsin. This issue will give you an inside peak to the progress and change we’ve seen in women’s health as well as what we are doing currently to address the diseases and conditions that most impact women’s wellness. Hear directly from our Founder, Sue Ann Thompson, as she reflects on what she is most proud of and what she continues to look forward to. We have details about our 20th Anniversary Spring Gala Fundraiser and other annual events. And learn about our various grants and how they are directly impacting the community.

We are so fortunate to have done this work for the past 20 years, and we will continue to provide health education and services to women and their families across the state. We look forward to the opportunities and challenges the next 20 years bring, and we thank you for your generous support.

Yours for a healthy Wisconsin,

Tommi Thompson, Executive Director

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Wisconsin Women’s Health Foundation

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Lisa A. H. Cudahy
Community Activist

Marilyn Follen, RN, MSN
Coordinator, Advance Care Planning, Marshfield Clinic

Jane Blain Gilbertson
CEO & Owner, Blain’s Farm & Fleet and Blain Supply, Inc.

Jake Orville
President & CEO, Cleveland Heart Lab, Inc.

James R. Riordan
Retired President and CEO Emeritus, WI Physicians Service Insurance

Visit our website wwhf.org

2017 Board of Directors

EveryWoman's Journal teaches women to use journaling as a tool for stress reduction and self-care at workshops statewide.

First Breath helps pregnant women quit smoking by training healthcare providers to deliver tobacco counseling.

First Breath Families helps create smoke-free households through statewide text message support and postpartum home visits in select counties.

The Komen Breast Fund provides financial assistance for men and women in need of breast health services.

GrapeVine trains nurses to lead health education sessions in their communities.

My Baby & Me helps women achieve alcohol-free pregnancies through screenings, education, phone counseling and text message support.

Our Programs
Innovate, Impact, Improve Women’s Health

**A 20 Year View of Wisconsin Women’s Health Foundation**

**1997**
Sue Ann Thompson founds WWHF after completing treatment for breast cancer

**1998**
WWHF hits the road with “Roundtable” health education events statewide

**2000**
First Dr. Judith Stitt Woman Faculty Scholar Award is presented to Dr. Linda Saladin for her research on environmental factors in breast cancer risk

**2002**
Roundtable events evolve into GrapeVine Parish Nurse program
Badger Heart Party travels the state providing free cholesterol & blood pressure screenings

**2003**
Statewide First Breath program launches after a successful pilot to help pregnant women quit smoking

**2006**
Official WWHF license plate available through DOT

**2008**
WWHF publishes “Report on Women’s Health in Wisconsin” summarizing Wisconsin-specific statistics and highlighting focus areas for improvement

**2009**
First Breath serves 10,000 pregnant women

**2011**
WWHF staff grows to 29 employees working out of offices in Madison & Milwaukee, with additional outreach staff in Eau Claire, Green Bay, Wausau, and Kenosha

**2012**
Partnership with Komen/Kohl’s provides financial assistance to over 500 women for mammography and access to breast health resources

**2015**
Over 1,000 women served in Striving to Quit postpartum home visit & smoking cessation 5-year study

**2016**
GrapeVine program grows to partner with 125 nurse volunteers
My Baby & Me program launches texting support program to offer a digital resource for achieving alcohol-free pregnancies

**2017**
WWHF celebrates 20 years!

**2017**
Official WWHF license plate available through DOT

**2018**
Over 1,000 women served in Striving to Quit postpartum home visit & smoking cessation 5-year study

**2020**
Partnership with Komen/Kohl’s provides financial assistance to over 500 women for mammography and access to breast health resources

**2023**
WWHF celebrates 20 years of innovation, impact, and improvement in women’s health.
Q: What are you looking forward to in the WWHF’s 20th year and beyond?

A: Retirement! Ha! Actually, I don’t know if I’ll ever really retire. I love what we do at the WWHF and I love being part of the action. I know that the organization is in good hands with our current staff, so I am comfortable taking more time away from the office, doing some traveling, and spending time with family and friends. But I also feel the itch to get back to the office and stay involved. I’m interested to see what health needs emerge next, and how we can be part of solutions.

WWHF Research Grants Impact

After receiving a WWHF research grant, awardees have:

Research Grants
Earned more than $100 Million in research grants.

Research Publications
Written nearly 600 research papers published in peer-reviewed publications.

Patents
Obtained or applied for five patents.

Review Committees
Sat on grant review committees, including the Center for Scientific Review, National Institutes of Health and National Cancer Institute.

Presentations
Given nearly 300 presentations in their field of expertise, nearly tripling the number of presentations they gave prior to receiving the award.

For more information about the WWHF’s research grants program, visit www.wwhf.org

Rachael Crane: How WWHF supported me.

The Komen Breast Fund provides financial assistance for men and women in need of breast care services. Since 2010, the WWHF has administered funds from Komen Southeast Wisconsin supported by Kohl’s Cares, reaching over 500 women each year. The financial support helps eliminate barriers to breast cancer care, making recommended services accessible for all women.

Meet Rachael Crane—a 2016 recipient of Komen funds. In April 2016 she felt a lump, but as a 26-year-old and like most women, she wrote it off as nothing. It was when she started experiencing unbearable breast pain that she went to her doctor to have it checked out. Even going into biopsy, she was thinking it was no big deal. You’re too young for cancer. It’s probably just a benign tumor like your mother has had before. The diagnosis blindsided her, especially when she found out how rapidly her triple negative breast cancer was growing. Two months ago, when she first found the lump, a lumpectomy would have sufficed. Now, she was facing a double mastectomy and six months of chemotherapy.

The Komen Breast Fund was available to provide support when Rachael needed it the most. “Life doesn’t stop when you have cancer (especially as a young wife and mother); you just have to keep going!” The funds that were administered helped Rachael keep going, covering many of her medical bills and expenses so she could focus on what mattered most—fighting breast cancer.

Today, Rachael is finished with treatment and is looking ahead to reconstruction surgery. Thanks in part to the assistance provided by the Komen Breast Fund, she was able to receive the services she needed, and is now cancer-free!

For questions or more information regarding the Komen Breast Fund, please contact Janet Johnson, Program Coordinator, at janetj@wwhf.org.

Grant highlights

Wisconsin Medical Society Foundation

Grant to train faith communities and medical students in Honoring Choices Wisconsin’s advance care planning facilitation.

Outcome

42 individuals were trained in advance care planning curriculum, and 16 one-on-one facilitations completed with efforts ongoing.

WWHF’s 20th year and beyond?

Annual Dialogue - October 18, 2017
Edgewater Hotel, Madison

The Annual Dialogue is a moderated panel discussion with local and national leaders discussing complex issues related to the health of Wisconsin families. This year we’ll be collaborating with the experts to bring women the information they need to know about breast cancer.

Annual Gala - May 20, 2017
Madison Concourse Hotel

The Spring Gala is our annual fundraiser. This year marks 20 years! All proceeds go to our programs to support Wisconsin women and their families with the resources they need to reach their healthiest potential.

6:00 PM - Auction and Cocktail Reception
Madison Concourse Hotel

8:00 PM - Midnight: Dining, Drinks, Dancing
Wisconsin State Capitol

Ticket options to the most unique event in Madison:
$1,500 = Table for Ten
$1,200 = Table for Eight
$125 = Individual ticket

Buy your tickets today! www.wwhf.org/springgala

GrapeVine Conference - July 24-25, 2017
Sheraton Madison Hotel

Opportunity for our GrapeVine community partners to brush up on old skills and learn new ones. The two-day conference includes unit trainings, breakout sessions and exhibits.

The Gathering - September 21, 2017
Marshfield Clinic

The Gathering provides women an opportunity to connect with friends, view exhibits, and access the information and resources they need to be healthy. The theme this year will focus on maternal and child health and the influence of grandmothers.

For more information on either Advance Care Planning or Heart Health, check out our corresponding GrapeVine sessions: www.org/grapevinesproject
Since 1997, the Wisconsin Women’s Health Foundation has aimed to innovate, impact and improve women’s health. Found in all 72 counties of Wisconsin, WWHF hopes to help every woman achieve their healthiest potential through our six statewide women’s health programs, free health education events and administering funds to women’s health researchers. Together, we can make a healthier Wisconsin.

**WWHF Mission**

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April Showers

WWHF Spring Fund Campaign

Donate $50

Receive WWHF Umbrella

wwhf.org/donate

Get yours today!