

## Women's Foundation of Minnesota Honored for Young Women's Initiative at Women's Funding Network 2017 Leadership in Equity and Diversity (LEAD) Awards

(September 1, Minneapolis) – The Women's Foundation of Minnesota and Lee Roper-Batker are among eight women's foundations and their CEO's that launched Young Women's Initiatives in their communities. The LEAD award celebrates outstanding risk-takers and innovators in the philanthropic community who, through their determination and leadership, have increased funding for programs that promote gender equity and diversity.

"We created the Young Women's Initiative for three reasons: We want every young woman in America to have access to equal opportunity. We want them to be able to create and lead safe and prosperous lives. And we know that when young women do better, their families and communities do better, and we all do better," said Lee Roper-Batker, president and CEO, Women's Foundation of Minnesota.

Naming the eight organizations acknowledges women's foundations roles as donors *and* catalysts for change. "This year, we are presenting the award to each of the eight women's foundations that have pioneered Young Women's Initiatives (YWI), said Cynthia Nimmo, Women's Funding Network CEO, "because the presidents of these foundations have shown ingenuity and fortitude in their vision of young women and focus on young women of color as advocates, and spokespeople with direct access to legislators and other decision-makers."

Each of the foundations have demonstrated a commitment to social change while actively addressing gender, race, class, (dis)ability, age, and sexual orientation when making grants. They are also mobilizing philanthropic resources to support programs that benefit women and girls. The YWIs were spotlighted at the 2016 United State of Women summit, hosted by the White House Council on Women and Girls.

### 2017 LEAD Awardees:

- Jeanne Jackson, Women's Fund of Greater Birmingham
- Surina Khan, Women's Foundation of California
- Roslyn Dawson Thompson, Dallas Women's Foundation
- Ruby Bright, Women's Foundation for a Greater Memphis
- Lee Roper-Batker, Women's Foundation of Minnesota
- Ana Oliveira, New York Women's Foundation
- Irma Gonzales (CEO) and Elizabeth Barajas Roman (former CEO), Women's Fund of Western Massachusetts
- Jennifer Lockwood-Shabat, Washington Area Women's Foundation

The LEAD Awards will be presented Wednesday September 6<sup>th</sup> in San Francisco during Women's Funding Network's #WomenFunded2017 global conference.

**2017**

**About Women's Funding Network**



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Women's Funding Network is the largest philanthropic network devoted to women and girls, engaging over 100 institutions and foundations. We imagine, incubate and lead initiatives, programs, and collective action on critical issues.

### **About the Women's Foundation of Minnesota**

The Women's Foundation of Minnesota is a statewide community foundation investing in innovation to drive gender equity. The Foundation envisions a world of equal opportunity where women and girls – and all people – hold the power to create and lead safe, prosperous lives. Through grantmaking, research, and public policy, the Foundation is building pathways to opportunity and economic prosperity for all girls and women in Minnesota. Founded in 1983, it is the first and largest statewide women's foundation in the country. More at [WFMN.ORG](http://WFMN.ORG).