



ANNUAL REPORT

2024 - 2025

Women's Bar Association
FOUNDATION
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



LEVERAGING THE GENEROSITY
OF LAWYERS AND FRIENDS TO
SUPPORT NONPROFITS THAT SERVE
THE LEGAL AND RELATED NEEDS
OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN THE DC
METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY.

MISSION

LEVERAGING THE GENEROSITY OF LAWYERS AND FRIENDS TO SUPPORT NONPROFITS THAT SERVE THE LEGAL AND RELATED NEEDS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN THE DC METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Thank you for being an impactful member of the Women’s Bar Association Foundation community, helping it to advance its critical mission of funding nonprofits that serve the legal and related needs of women or girls in the DC metro area. I am privileged to share with you how, with your generous support and that of other Foundation donors and contributors, we have advanced its mission this past year.

The Foundation started this past bar year with its 22nd annual Wine Tasting and Silent Auction. This event is the Foundation’s premier fundraiser, with the proceeds going primarily towards funding the grants awarded by the Foundation. The celebratory theme for the 2024 Wine Tasting was “C’est Le Vin: An Evening of French Wines.” **Kirkland & Ellis, LLP** graciously provided

the enchanting venue, including its lovely outdoor patio with its DC skyline gazing view, and mother nature provided the perfect weather to take advantage of it! All of that, along with the delicious French wines and amazing auction items made it a night to remember!

In addition to funding community grants through the Wine Tasting proceeds, the Foundation also funds its annual Founders Fellowship. This fellowship, which rotates among DC’s six law schools, allows a law student to work with local legal service providers on projects that benefit women or girls in our community. Our 2024 Founders Fellow was **Calypso Moschochoritis**, a Catholic University Law School student. Ms. Moschochoritis interned for Foundation grantee Ayuda and focused on immigration law. During the Wine Tasting, she shared with us the important work she undertook, and how it inspired her as a person and future lawyer.

In March this year, we held our annual Grants Awards Ceremony—our reason for being—generously hosted by **Hogan Lovells**. During this year’s ceremony, the Foundation awarded \$75,000 in grants to nine grantee organizations: **Amara Legal Center, DC Kincaire Alliance, DC Volunteer Lawyers Project, First Shift Justice Project, Georgetown University Health Justice Alliance, The Human Trafficking Legal Center, Mother’s Outreach Network, The Safe Sisters Circle**, and **Volare** (formerly Network of Victim Recovery DC). With these awards, possible only with the support of our generous sponsors and donors, the Foundation’s cumulative total funds given to the community exceeded \$1.3 million!

These local organizations supported by the Foundation provide a wide range of critical legal and support services for at-risk women and children. Examples include providing legal services for survivors of domestic abuse, helping women in low-income jobs secure basic employment rights, and helping survivors of sex trafficking. These organizations provide crucial services that not only improve the lives of countless individuals in the DC metropolitan community but also our community at large.

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The Foundation is honored to be able to support their inspirational work and applauds its 2025 awardees. More information about our grantees can be found on pages X-X of this program and at www.wbadcfoundation.org.

Not only were attendees able to engage directly with representatives from our Grantee organizations and explore personal volunteer opportunities during the awards ceremony, we were all inspired and deeply impacted by the remarks of our keynote speaker, **Alexandra Bailey**. Ms. Bailey is a former client of one of the Foundation’s grantees, Volare, who courageously shared her deeply moving experience of how, as a survivor of domestic violence, the Foundation’s grantee helped her not only survive but put her on the road to thriving.

We also took the opportunity to honor our 2025 WBA Foundation Champion, **Gaffar Chowdhury, CAP®**, in recognition of his unwavering support of the Foundation. For more than a decade, Gaffar generously has given his time and talent to support the Foundation, starting in his leadership roles as a board member and Treasurer. Additionally, his financial support of the Foundation has been steadfast, not only as a regular and generous sponsor of our Wine Tasting and Grant Awards Ceremony, but also as a founding member of the WBAF’s Legacy Circle, committing to the Foundation in his estate planning.

As we reflect on this past bar year, I must take a moment to express my deepest gratitude for the truly inspiring Foundation community, which includes the Women’s Bar Association membership, Foundation sponsors and donors, the Foundation board, our grantees, and their important clientele, the women and girls they serve in the broader DC metro area. **As a part of the Foundation community, you make possible the Foundation’s powerful, meaningful, and impactful engagement down to the most personal, human level.**

Please join, continue to participate in, or invite others to join our community, in support of the Foundation’s mission to change the lives of women and girls in the DC Metro area and to improve our broader community for the better. You can do so in any of the following ways:

- Make a one-time or recurring donation.
- Sponsor either the Wine Tasting and Silent Auction or the Grants Awards Ceremony.
- Include the Foundation in your estate planning, thereby becoming a member of the Sustaining Legacy Circle. Members are listed on page X of this report and on the Foundation’s website.

Information on how to support the Foundation via any and all of these options is available at www.wbadcfoundation.org.

We appreciate your support given during the 2024-2025 Foundation year and look forward to your continued support as an engaged member of the Foundation’s community moving forward.

With gratitude,



Mary Ellen Kleiman

GRANTMAKING PROGRAM AND GRANTEE AWARDS CEREMONY

The first step in our grantmaking process is a request for Letters of Inquiry (LOI). The Foundation received 22 LOIs in August 2025, requesting a total of \$218,425 in support. The Foundation’s Grants Committee reviewed the information in each submission and invited 15 of the organizations to submit a full grant application.

The Grants Committee carefully reviewed each proposal received, made a recommendation to the full Board of Directors to fund a total of \$75,000 in grants to 9 organizations (information about the projects funded can be found on pages X to X). Grantees are required to submit a final report of activities conducted under each grant. These reports are also reviewed by the Grants Committee.



Our 2025 Grant Awards Ceremony was held on March 12, at the offices of Hogan Lovells. Over 100 were in attendance, including supporters, Foundation and Association leaders, grantees, and sponsors.

Grant checks were presented to this year’s nine grantees. Representatives from each organization were in attendance and were able to network with others to talk about their work and volunteer opportunities within their organizations.



Laura Brown, First Shift Justice Project, receives a grant check from Board member Raquel Skinner.



Ogechi Muotoh, Gaffar Chowdhury, CAP® & Brooke Chowdhury

The evening included the presentation of the 2025 WBAF Champion Award to **Gaffar Chowdhury, CAP®**. In his remarks, Gaffar discussed the impact his Foundation service has had on him professionally and personally. “The seven years I served on the Foundation board were some of the most formative of my career. I saw firsthand how directing financial resources with purpose could transform lives for women and girls,” he said. “That experience didn’t just deepen my commitment to this organization; it helped shape my professional path. It led me to pursue my Chartered Advisor in Philanthropy (CAP®) designation so that I could help others align their financial planning with their values—creating impact in ways that benefit both donors and causes.”

He also noted that, “Personally, it also reinforced my belief in leading by example. The Foundation is a part of our family’s annual giving and my own estate plan because I want to ensure that this work continues for generations

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Foundation president Mary Ellen Kleiman and WBAF Champion Gaffar Chowdhury, CAP®

Selflessly, she has been paying it forward through her advocacy on behalf of other survivors, especially those who have been incarcerated for defending themselves against their abusers. She helped pass the first national legislation to allow for the resentencing of criminalized survivors. Additionally, her accomplishments include working as a Campaign Strategist and National Organizing Specialist for the ACLU and as a Coordinator for the Women’s March in Chicago. She has used her organizing skills to win campaigns including voting rights for unhoused citizens and the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment in Illinois.



Keynote speaker Alexandra Bailey



Foundation president Mary Ellen Kleiman addresses attendees.

to come. I encourage everyone here to consider how charitable planning can be a part of their legacy.”

A highlight of the evening was hearing from our keynote speaker, **Alexandra Bailey**, an activist and advocate for domestic violence survivors all over the country. Alexandra helped pass the first national legislation to allow for the resentencing of criminalized survivors. Alexandra shared her personal story of domestic violence and the steps she took, with the help of her family, friends, and the staff at Foundation grantee Volare, to escape the abusive situation in which she found herself. She credited Volare’s law firm partners with providing the pro bono support and legal expertise she needed to change her circumstances.

Each year, the Grant Awards Ceremony is an empowering event, reminding our Foundation community of its important purpose. It showcases the services and successes of our grantees, and brings our supporters together with the organizations that their funds support. Hearing from our Champion and keynote remind us of the transformative work of the Foundation and how supporting our grant program affects those in our community.

Save the date for our 2026 Grant Awards Ceremony: March 11, 2026, at Hogan Lovells.



Members of the Foundation Board with grantee representatives.

2025 GRANTEES

The WBA Foundation grants program supports community nonprofit organizations in the DC metropolitan area that serve the legal and related needs of women and girls in the DC Metropolitan community. The Foundation’s grant recipients reach and serve some of the most vulnerable members of our community, individuals who are facing challenges ranging from homelessness to domestic violence and workplace discrimination.



AMARA LEGAL CENTER provides free legal services to survivors of sex trafficking and those who have been harmed by the commercial sex industry, whether involvement was by coercion, necessity, choice, or otherwise, in the DC metropolitan area. Amara’s attorneys are trained in providing trauma-informed legal services and are devoted to providing comprehensive support, making sure that its clients know they are not navigating their cases alone. The WBAF grant will support survivors of sex trafficking with legal services, including civil protection orders, child custody, divorce, sealing and vacating criminal records, and victim-witness advocacy.



DC KINCARE ALLIANCE supports the legal, financial, and related service needs of relative caregivers, the majority of whom are women, who step up to raise children in their extended families in times of crisis when the children’s parents are not able to care for them. DC KinCare Alliance is the only organization in DC focused solely on serving relative caregivers raising DC’s at-risk children. The WBAF grant will support PROJECT ADOPT, which represents relative caregivers trying to adopt the children they raise, and provides legal help to relative caregivers to obtain the rights, benefits, and services needed to ensure a safe and stable home for children whose parents can no longer care for them.



The **DC VOLUNTEER LAWYERS PROJECT** addresses the critical shortage of legal assistance for low-income people in Washington, DC, especially in cases involving domestic violence. The WBAF grant will support the Domestic Violence Program, which provides comprehensive trauma-informed legal, advocacy, and support services to low-income survivors of domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence, focusing on Wards 5, 7 & 8.



FIRST SHIFT JUSTICE PROJECT empowers workers to exercise their workplace rights. They represent clients whose rights have been violated. Through partnerships with medical clinics and nonprofits, they educate health care providers about the legal rights of caregivers in the workplace so they can better support their patients at work. The WBAF grant will support efforts to empower pregnant and caregiving workers in low wage jobs to exercise their rights related to caregiving and parenting.



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY HEALTH JUSTICE ALLIANCE believes that an equitable society, where everyone has the opportunity to thrive and contribute to an integrated and supportive community, requires fair access to health and justice resources. They use law as a tool to improve individual health and wellbeing, transform the systems used to deliver healthcare, and advance Georgetown’s broader goals for health, justice, and racial equity. The WBAF grant will support the Perinatal Legal Assistance & Wellbeing (P-LAW) Project to address the health-harming legal needs of pregnant and postpartum patients receiving care at MedStar Washington Hospital Center’s Division of Women’s and Infants Services.



The **HUMAN TRAFFICKING LEGAL CENTER** connects trafficking survivors with pro bono representation so they can seek justice and thrive. They demand accountability from traffickers, from governments, and from corporations. The WBAF grant will support the Diplomatic Trafficking Program, which is dedicated to combating the trafficking of domestic workers by diplomats and employees of international organizations.



MOTHER’S OUTREACH NETWORK facilitates the power of Black mothers subject to systems of disempowerment, such as the family regulation and foster system, to upend a socio-economic structure that inadequately addresses their full potential for economic independence. It advances economic security for women and families through social justice education, mutual aid, grassroots mobilization, and legal advocacy, focused on disadvantaged Black women in Washington, DC. The WBAF grant supports efforts to empower Black mothers currently involved in, and at-risk for, their children’s involvement in the child welfare system, with support to achieve economic independence, security, and mobility, and equip them with the skills necessary to navigate DC’s complex legal, criminal, and foster care systems.



The **SAFE SISTERS CIRCLE** provides free culturally-specific, trauma-informed, and legal holistic services to Black women survivors of domestic violence and/or sexual abuse. Rooted in Safe Sisters Circle is the belief that there is value in having an organization established for Black women and where the majority of service providers and leadership within the organization are also Black women. The WBAF grant will support the Community Lawyer Initiative, which is on-site legal services and traveling legal clinics that provide legal representation to Black women survivors of domestic and sexual violence living primarily in Wards 7 and 8.



VOLARE (formerly Network of Victim Recovery DC) creates equitable healing and dignified experiences for survivors of crime by providing free, trauma-informed advocacy, therapeutic, and legal services in conjunction with strategic litigation, policy advocacy, and education to transform existing responses to harm. The WBAF grant will support DV LEAP, a leader in survivor appellate advocacy; attorneys challenge unjust trial outcomes by litigating appeals, filing Amicus briefs, and fighting for survivor rights all the way to the Supreme Court.

FOUNDERS FELLOWSHIP



The WBA Foundation Founders Fellowship was established in 2006 and is awarded annually to one of the six law schools located in Washington, DC. The fellowship is used by the school to support a student who is pursuing a public interest summer internship to advance the legal interests of women and children.

The 2024 WBA Foundation Founders Fellowship, in the amount of \$5,000, was awarded to the Columbus School of Law (Catholic University), which selected **Calypso Moschochoritis** as the recipient. Ms. Moschochoritis was an Immigration Legal Intern at Ayuda, which provides legal, social, and language services to help low-income immigrants access justice. Fellows are required to provide an essay about their experience. Ms. Moschochoritis said:

“Working at Ayuda has been one of the most rewarding professional experiences I have had. As an immigrant myself, I have always been passionate about the topic of immigration, and interning at Ayuda solidified my commitment to pursuing a career in this field. While I was initially intimidated because I did not have a deep understanding of the legal technicalities of immigration, I quickly realized that I could apply much of what I had learned in my first year of law school to the job. At Ayuda, I had the privilege of working with an incredible team of legal professionals and immigration advocates. With the guidance and support of my supervisors, I was able to navigate the complexities of immigration cases and gain practical experience on the job. Each day presented new challenges, but with their help, I became more confident in my ability to assist clients. I was entrusted with projects involving asylum applications, U and T visas, and Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) petitions. It was a rewarding experience that expanded my skills and reinforced my commitment to helping vulnerable communities.

Working at Ayuda was emotionally taxing. The horrors my clients experienced in their home countries, and what some continued to endure in the United States, were unthinkable. I had to learn how to compartmentalize my emotions so that I would not carry the weight of their stories home with me. My supervisors were an incredible resource in this respect. They taught me that it is only human to feel those emotions and that, with time and reflection, I would be able to empower my clients without emotionally burdening myself.”

The full essay is available on the Foundation [website](#).

WBAF CHAMPION



The WBA Foundation Board of Directors created the WBA Foundation Champion Award in 2022. The purpose of the award is to recognize a devoted WBA Foundation champion. The 2024 recipient of the award was **Gaffar Chowdhury, CAP®**.

Gaffar is a dedicated supporter of the Foundation whose unfaltering devotion to its mission has manifested in multiple ways over many years. Gaffar served on the WBAF Board from 2013 – 2020. During his tenure, he was engaged on the Finance, Nominations and Strategy Planning committees and served as the Foundation’s Treasurer for 2 years. While serving, he freely offered and used his financial expertise to help guide the Foundation and nurture its fiscal responsibility. He also graciously opened his home multiple times to host the Foundation’s donor appreciation events.

In addition to being an actively engaged and impactful board leader, Gaffar, repeatedly and generously has sponsored the Wine Tasting and Grant Awards Ceremony! His stalwart support of the Foundation also is reflected in the fact that he is a founding member of the WBAF’s Legacy Circle, having committed to the WBAF in his estate planning, helping to ensure the long-term financial well-being of the Foundation.

While his monetary support is critical, of equal importance is the selfless donation of his precious free time and valuable professional services to the Foundation’s Silent Auction. In particular, he has repeatedly donated to be auctioned off a popular weekend outing on his boat on the Potomac, in which he takes the winner and several guests on a scenic summer afternoon/evening wine and cheese cruise on the river. He also has donated his professional financial planning services, through his company, District Wealth Strategies, including, without hesitation, in response to an open call to Foundation supporters for additional auction items.

Gaffar, often joined by his wife, Brooke, makes it a priority to attend Foundation events, reliably there, in person, to mingle and engage at all of its fundraisers. But it doesn’t end there -- Gaffar enthusiastically uses his voice on public platforms to champion the Foundation. Specifically, he is an active and unrelenting promoter of the Foundation on social media, raising the Foundation’s profile and promoting its mission, across his expansive professional and personal network.

Gaffar is the President & CEO of District Wealth Strategies, a financial planning firm, and currently serves on the Women’s Bar Association’s Wellbeing Committee, on the D.C. Bar’s Board of Governors, and as the Immediate Past President of the National Association of Insurance and Financial Advisors - Greater Washington D.C.

WINE TASTING & SILENT AUCTION



Le soir de October 24, 2024, the Foundation hosted its annual Wine Tasting and Silent Auction. It was a night to remember! Sponsors, individual ticket holders, and friends of the Foundation gathered for a good cause online and at the scenic DC office of **Kirkland & Ellis**. This year’s fundraiser – themed “C’est Le Vin: An Evening of French Wines” – allowed the almost 200 attendees to indulge in various elegant, fruit-forward, and dry French wines perfectly paired with delicious hors d’oeuvres.

The tasting portion of the evening was led by **Jay Youmans**, MW, the Educational Director and Owner of the Capital Wine School. Jay is an Advanced Level Sommelier (AS), a Certified Wine Educator (CWE), a French Wine Scholar (FWS), an Italian Wine Professional (IWP), a Bordeaux Wine Educator, a Burgundy Wine Educator, a Certified Specialist of Sherry, and Washington, DC’s first Master of Wine (MW).

Patrons joyously mingled during this momentous occasion while bidding on cherished items gifted by the WBAF’s generous donors. Hot ticket items included vacation stays, sports tickets, a luxury bag, captivating art, fine jewelry, and unique gift baskets. Unsurprisingly, bidding wars, including between unsuspecting family members, were playfully afoot until the final few seconds before the silent auction officially closed. By the end of the night, proceeds from sponsorship and the auction surpassed those of all prior years – including last year’s record-breaking fundraising efforts – all thanks to supporters like you!



Attendees from sponsor Beacon Hill Legal engaged with attendees at their sponsor table.



Adriana Zimmer, Jennifer Duane & Laura Pettus



Sonia Murphy, Paulette Pagan, Foundation Vice President Kerri Castellini & Aiden Pasternak



Foundation Past President Ellen Jakovic, Emily Lagan, Jillian Ambrose & Sadina Montani

The Foundation is sincerely grateful to all of its sponsors, individual ticket holders, auction donors, and winning bidders for joining us and making this event a record-breaking success and evening of fellowship! Our collaborative effort has proven the French expression “rien n’est impossible” to be true: **nothing is impossible**.

Save the date for our 2025 Wine Tasting & Silent Auction: October 23, 2025 at Venable.



2024 WINE TASTING AND SILENT AUCTION SPONSORS & CONTRIBUTORS

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Sandline Global

Reserve Level

Crowell
FTI Consulting
Kirkland & Ellis LLP

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Auction Item Donors

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Arudia
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Baked by Yael
Bradford Renaissance Portraits
Brother Jimmy's BBQ
Camp Twin Creeks
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We have made every effort to ensure the accuracy of this listing. If we have made an error, please accept our apology. You can call us at 202 639 8880 so that we can correct our records.



WBA/WBA FOUNDATION ANNUAL DINNER



The WBA/WBA Foundation Annual Dinner is one of the largest gatherings of legal professionals in the District. It's also a significant fundraiser for the Foundation, supporting our grant programs and operations.

The event was held at the National Building Museum on May 22, 2025. The evening's program included remarks from the 2024-2025 WBA President, **Mary Blatch**, 2024-2025 WBA Foundation President, **Mary Ellen Kleiman**, and 2024-2025 WBA President-Elect, **Jennifer Mammen**. The 2025 Woman Lawyer of the Year Award was presented to **Vanita Gupta**, former Associate Attorney General of the United States, with remarks by 2024 Woman Lawyer of the Year, **Ellen Jakovic**, and an introduction by **Fatima Goss Graves**. Attendees also had an opportunity to view the Foundation's grantee video, highlighting the services and impact of our 2025 grantees.



Jennifer Mammen, Mary Blatch, Vanita Gupta, Fatima Goss Graves, Mary Blatch & Ellen Jakovic



Jennifer Mammen, Mary Blatch, Vanita Gupta, Fatima Goss Graves, Mary Blatch & Ellen Jakovic



Foundation president Mary Ellen Kleiman gave her president's report at the dinner

ONLINE CAMPAIGNS

The Foundation participated in two online giving campaigns this past year: Giving Tuesday and Springtime Support. The campaigns were promoted through social media and board member outreach to their personal networks.



Giving Tuesday is held the Tuesday after Thanksgiving. It’s a day when people are encouraged to do good and give generously. The December 3, 2024 fundraiser raised over \$4,100, from 13 donors; a small increase from the prior year.



We launched our spring fundraiser at the Annual Dinner on May 22, and invited donors to support us in a 24-hour giving blitz through May 23. The result was over \$2,700 raised from 24 donors, an increase over prior spring fundraisers.

PLANNED GIVING

To effectively pursue the WBA Foundation’s mission of meeting the legal needs of women and girls in the DC area, we must ensure the Foundation’s long-term financial vitality. Planned gifts can help support the Foundation and its mission in a significant way in the future without affecting current income or savings. Gifts to the Foundation that cost nothing during your lifetime can be made as part of the legacy you leave behind. Options include:

- Name the WBA Foundation as a beneficiary of an existing life insurance policy, a retirement or investment account, or a charitable annuity;
- Establish a bequest through your will or trust;
- Establish a charitable trust that supports the WBA Foundation and your loved ones.

The growth of the Foundation’s endowment depends primarily on gifts from bequests. An attorney or financial planner can help to identify other ways to support the WBA Foundation and provide tax savings while possibly leaving more assets to heirs.

Sustaining Legacy Circle members are incredibly generous supporters who have named the WBA Foundation in their estate planning and/or have already made a bequest to the Foundation.

SUSTAINING LEGACY CIRCLE (as of May 31, 2025)

- Candace Beck
- Gaffar Chowdhury
- Grace Parke Fremlin
- Rachel & Matt Hardwick
- Mary Ellen Fleck Kleiman
- Bridget Bailey Lipscomb
- Nancy A. Long
- Susan Kovarovics
- Elizabeth Sinnott Medaglia
- Sadina Montani
- Monica G. Parham* (bequest funds received in 2022)
- Suzanne Reifman
- Suzanne Richards* (bequest funds received in 2018)
- Joseph H. Sinnott
- Kirsten L. Wilkerson
- Natalia C. Wilson

*deceased

2025 GRANT AWARDS SPONSORS

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VERITEXT

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Steptoe LLP

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District Wealth Strategies
Tenenbaum Law Group PLLC

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Rachel and Matt Hardwick
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Kathleen V. Gunning
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Courtney Wilkes

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

It is through the support of committed donors in our community that the WBA Foundation can carry on its important work. The WBA Foundation extends its gratitude to the following donors for their generosity. (Note: this list represents direct donations from those listed; it does not reflect contributions made via event sponsorship, which are listed on pages X-X.)

\$2,000+

Natalia Wilson Armstrong
Indira Henard
Microsoft
Vickie Robinson

\$1,000 - \$1,999

Ann Ford
Jacqueline Johnson
Gwendolyn Renigar

\$500 - \$999

Hon. Diane Brenneman
Kathryn Caballero
Jon Canty
Susan Kovarovics
Janell Mallard
M. Elizabeth Medaglia & Joe Sinnott
Bonnie Pinzel
Michelle Webster

Contributors listed in this list participated between June 1, 2024 and May 31, 2025. We have made every effort to ensure the accuracy of this listing. If we have made an error, please accept our apology. You can call us at 202 639 8880 so that we can correct our records.

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