

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Baby, she'd be so damn proud! Maddie's Circle relaunches by awarding five grants**

(Des Moines, Iowa) - Relaunching with a new structure, Maddie's Circle today announced the award of grants to five organizations that will introduce programs to reach a new generation of philanthropists and community leaders. Partnerships have been formed and grants awarded to Chrysalis, Des Moines Area Religious Council (DMARC,) Drake University, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), Greater Des Moines, and United Way of Central Iowa.

The purpose of Maddie's Circle is to ignite a passion in philanthropy and volunteering among those seeking greater engagement and impact in our community, particularly among people who need encouragement, help and guidance to get more involved. The underlying principles of Maddie's Circle are: giving, volunteering, mentoring and fun. The goal is to identify and provide resources to support projects that inspire and carry on Maddie Levitt's spirit of philanthropy, mentoring and volunteerism while impacting important community needs.

"Maddie was passionate about empowering new community leaders, especially women. She had a long-lasting impact on too many community projects to mention. But I believe her greatest legacy was mentoring, guiding and befriending dozens of people who became important community leaders in their own right." said Mary O'Keefe fund advisor of Maddie's Circle. "And she made it so much fun. I cherish every "Baby, I'm so damn proud of you!" message she sent me."

### **A Legacy of Giving**

Organized in 2008 to honor Maddie Levitt and continue her contributions to Central Iowa following her death at 82, Maddie's Circle was designed to organize up to five giving circles at a time. Typical of giving circles, Maddie's Circle has reviewed and renewed its process as it has passed through various stages of development. In its new form, Maddie's Circle will be delivered in partnership with non-profit entities to maintain the portions of the program that worked well and modify the program to be more manageably run by volunteers. Continuing with an annual grant cycle, Maddie's Circle selects partner organizations that wish to encourage engagement by new audiences and the next generation of community leaders by organizing giving circles.

"Young professionals, people who've recently located to our community, and future generations of community leaders want to make a difference but may not know how to get involved," said Lynn Graves, fund advisor of Maddie's Circle. "Studies have shown this population is strongly interested in joining community improvement efforts and want to know how their support makes a difference."

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*"Baby, I'm so damn proud of you!"*  
- Maddie Levitt



Through an annual grant process, Maddie's Circle funds projects that:

- Encourage giving among new and next generation givers through giving, active mentoring, volunteering, and fun
- Include investment by the organization ("skin in the game") and work toward the project's self-sufficiency with a match for monetary contributions
- Empower people, especially women
- Honor Maddie's memory and keeps it alive
- Embrace Maddie's passion areas of health and human services, hunger, education and leadership
- Encourage individuals seeking to get involved in the community

Young and prospective community leaders will assist these non-profit organizations in further connecting with other young members of the Central Iowa community. Also adding age and ethnic/racial diversity, the circles will provide a means of greater input for non-profit organizations on employee, volunteering, board recruitment and achieving greater success.

"Mom got a tremendous amount of joy from giving, mentoring and volunteering. Her efforts were as much about sharing that joy as they were about raising money for good causes," said Suzie Glazer Burt "I miss her every day but this Maddie's Circle relaunch, in the tenth anniversary year of her death, is a powerful reminder of what a tremendous input one individual can have on a whole community."

"Maddie was a smart, funny, always-caring, people person. These qualities made her a legendary community leader *and* the world's greatest big sister," said Dick Levitt.

#### About Maddie Levitt

Maddie Levitt was a beloved community leader, mentor, benefactor, fundraiser and joyful spirit. She broke gender barriers and led by example, never asking anyone to do something she wasn't prepared to do herself. Maddie passed away in 2007. To honor her contributions in friendship, time, action, talent, impact and results, a group of family, friends and fellow community leaders formed Maddie's Circle, administered by the Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines.

#### About Maddie's Circle

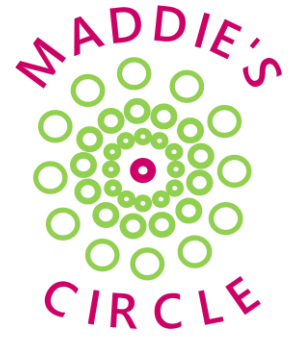
Maddie's Circle was formed as an endowed field of interest fund at the Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines. The program was designed to ignite a passion in philanthropy and volunteering among people not fully engaged in the community. The goal was to train members in all aspects of community leadership before going on to become independent givers and leaders while honoring the legacy of Maddie Levitt.

Maddie's Circle One was formed in 2010 and was made up of mid-career business women who had a strong financial orientation and chose financial literacy as their cause. In phase one, the group partnered with the Young Women's Resource Center and developed a financial curriculum that covered setting financial goals, budgeting banking, saving, credit and credit scores, employee benefits, and fraud. The circle attended and volunteered in the program. In phase two, the group partnered with Drake University to train education majors to teach financial literacy and now independently pursues their passion for financial literacy.

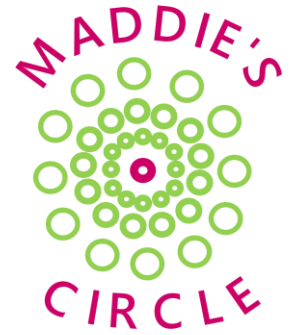
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*"Baby, I'm so damn proud of you!"*  
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Maddie's Circle Two was formed in 2011 and first partnered with Youth Emergency Shelter Services to develop an arts program for homeless children. In phase two, it has become Maddie's Advisory Group, a nimble, action-oriented mobile consulting group offering assistance with planning, strategy and development. Maddie's Advisory Group provided advice to Dorothy's House and is currently working with Hawthorn Hill and Bidwell Riverside.



One-on-one mentoring relationships were established with members of both of the first two Maddie's Circles.



## Grant recipients

### Chrysalis

Project: Chrysalis invests in the future of girls and women in Greater Des Moines and aims to reach a new generation (Generation X and Millennial volunteers and donors, age 22-52) who are interested in engaging in community improvement and social causes but who are not reached through traditional forms of outreach. **Fund Forward** is a new approach to reaching and engaging young professionals, especially women, between the ages of 30 and 45, and will be implemented in concert with existing outreach strategies. Fund Forward will create opportunities for young people to gather, network and learn about key issues facing girls and women in our community and in society. Participants will visit non-profit agencies that help girls and women, engage in projects and “friendraising” events, and meet mentors with experience and involvement in women’s social issues.

### DMARC

Project: The Des Moines Area Religious Council (DMARC) has been at the forefront of community action and advocacy in Des Moines for more than six decades. Funding from Maddie’s Circle will be used to support the organization’s newly formed **Millennial Committee**, a group of young leaders dedicated to engaging new generations of donors and volunteers in the fight against food insecurity. The Millennial Committee will serve as a bridge to the organization’s traditional Board of Directors by helping oversee outreach to younger populations and providing insight into resource development strategies that resonate with tech-savvy, cause-driven, and digital native generations.

With roots as an interfaith organization, DMARC is now an independent nonprofit operating the state’s largest food pantry system with a commitment to advance innovation within food assistance services for low-income families. DMARC has engaged in a number of groundbreaking initiatives, including a healthy choices food distribution system, a mobile pantry, and an award-winning pilot project focused on creating the “food pantry of the future”.

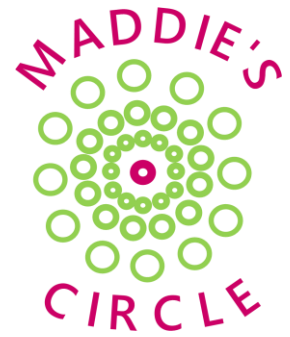
### Drake University

Project: **Student Alumni Association**. Drake University seeks to build a strong culture of philanthropy among its students and graduates. The Student Alumni Association (SAA) seeks to bridge the gap between the positive experience of students at Drake as reported by the majority of alumni and the small participation of those supporting Drake after graduation. By educating students on the impact philanthropy has had on their own experiences and by helping them to turn their affinity for Drake into action. This is accomplished through the three pillars of SAA’s programming:

- Traditions: SAA connects generations of Drake students and alumni and builds pride in the institution by promoting proud Drake traditions—like Street Painting, Beat Week and the Kissing Rock—through campus events and a mobile app called The Bulldog Experience. This year more than 2,100 students have attended the Student Alumni Association’s events and activities.

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- **Networking and Mentorship:** SAA has a number of opportunities for students to connect with alumni for networking and mentorship. These alumni serve as role models for career success but also for community involvement.
- **Philanthropy:** SAA educates students on the value that philanthropy has had on their own lives and educations. In 2017, SAA is planning a community improvement project in the Drake neighborhood.

#### NAMI Greater Des Moines

**Project: Support mental health services and education.** The program will increase awareness of mental health services, reduce the stigma surrounding mental illness, and increase the number of individuals accessing mental health services, especially adults with mental illness and family members of youth affected by mental illness. The grant will help by producing an overarching communication strategy, messaging, education and outreach program through on-line and social media, traditional messaging tools such as newsletters, and outreach at area events.

In partnership with the NAMI Greater Des Moines board of directors, the community education project will be driven by mentors, including Connie Wimer, Johnny Danos, Don Laster, and Lynn Graves, and mentees.

#### United Way:

**Project:** United Way of Central Iowa (UWCI) has established **LINC** (Lead. Impact. Network. Change.) LINC seeks to engage the power of community leaders age 30 and under to build leadership and impact change. United Way is working to involve like-minded young professionals in a way that is meaningful to them, to volunteer and make a difference in their community through the organizations where they donate. LINC funds will support programs that meet the essential needs (such as food and housing) of struggling central Iowans.

In order to more-deeply engage the next generation of givers, LINC offers individualized activities with opportunities for its members to become involved in planning and execution. It offers participants the chance to get behind worthy causes, make a difference they can see, and hang out afterward for food, drinks and volunteering.

Events for 2017 include making literacy kits for women and children, a volunteer planting event "Plant it Forward" on April 27; a professional development opportunity in May, "LINC, Think, Drink" which will include a Poverty Simulation; a volunteer event in July which will focus on volunteering at Anawim Housing, a summer celebration where we will be giving out bicycles, helmets, and locks to children in need; a professional development opportunity in September where LINC members have the opportunity to mix and mingle with UWCI's Board of Directors, and a December volunteering/social event called "Hoodies for the Holidays," encouraging high school students to attend college.

## MADELYN (MADDIE) LEVITT

A lifelong resident of Des Moines, Maddie was well known for her support of numerous educational, human service and arts organizations, both locally and nationally. A consummate civic volunteer and philanthropist, she was equally known for her sense of humor, her April Fool's day pranks and infectious smile.

Maddie graduated from Ohio State University with degrees in English and French. She successfully balanced a full personal, professional and volunteer life, raising four children, working professionally as the Director of Community Relations for Mercy Hospital, Public Relations Director for United Way of Central Iowa, and later as Special Assistant for Development to the President of Drake University.

Her volunteer service began in World War II as a nurse. Over the decades, she lent her time and talents to countless organizations, chairing fundraising events and serving on and chairing numerous boards of directors, including the Greater Des Moines Community Foundation, Drake University, the Ohio State University Foundation, National Jewish Hospital in Denver, Blank Park Zoo, Planned Parenthood of Central Iowa, United Way of Central Iowa, the National Women Philanthropy Institute, the Des Moines Art Center and the Boys and Girls Clubs of Central Iowa.

In 1985, Maddie became the first woman to chair the annual campaign for United Way of Central Iowa. One of her most notable contributions was having served as the National Chair for two capital campaigns of Drake University totaling \$320 million. She became the first woman in the United States to chair a coeducational university campaign that raised more than \$100 million, and the first person to chair two consecutive campaigns of \$100 million or more in the same decade for a US college or university.

Maddie was honored many times for her accomplishments. United Way of America presented her with the Outstanding Voluntary Service to Community and Country award in 1987. In 1988, she was given the Humanity Award by Variety Club.

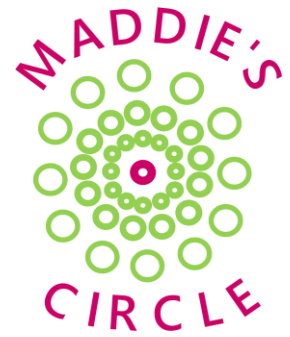
In 1990, Maddie received her Doctorate of Humane Letters from Drake University. In 1995, she was recognized by the National Society of Fund Raising Executives as the Nation's Outstanding Philanthropist. In 1998, Maddie won the Ernest Stewart Award for Alumni Volunteer Involvement at Drake University from the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE). She received the Iowa Star Award, the Distinguished Iowa Citizen Award from the Mid-Iowa Council of Boy Scouts of America, and the Humanitarian Award from the National Conference of Christians and Jews. In 2007, the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars of the Smithsonian Institution presented her with the prestigious Woodrow Wilson Award for Public Service.

Maddie grew up in Des Moines, where her father and mentor, Ellis I. Levitt, was a business and civic leader. He transformed a small consumer-loan company founded by his father, an immigrant from Lithuania, into a nationwide lending operation known as Dial Finance Corp. By the time Norwest acquired the company in 1982, Dial had grown into a \$1 billion a year business with more than 450 offices across the country. Norwest was subsequently acquired by Wells Fargo Financial.



*Maddie Levitt, 1925-2007*

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- Maddie Levitt



### Fund Advisors

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Kristi Knous  
Mary O'Keefe

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