

Lori Flexer Sackett and Circle of Giving

Lori Flexer Sackett played an instrumental role in launching a local Circle of Giving group to improve medical research dedicated specifically to women. Until about 10 years ago, Flexer Sackett says, this type of research was limited. Five years ago, Flexer Sackett met with the head of the Center for Women's Health to discuss philanthropic funding. With a core group of women, including MAC members Joann Albers, Mary Wilcox and Kathy Rudd, the group set out to improve research about medical issues facing women.

Flexer Sackett says the group has discovered an approach to philanthropy that works for women. It's an energetic collection of like-minded women who are engaged in the community. Together they have a bigger voice than they would have individually, and the whole process is an education for the group.

With the help of Dr. Michele Berlin, head of the Center for Women's Health at OHSU, the group narrows down a list of grant proposals to three and meets in the spring to hear presentations and select a winner. The group discusses each presentation and ultimately votes to fund one.

"It's a phenomenal education," Flexer Sackett says of the grant presentations. "They are so compelling we wish we could fund all of them." In some cases, individual members have agreed to offer some funding for a specific project that wasn't selected by the group as a whole.

Today the group is in its fourth year, awarding \$125,000 annually to a specific research project. Flexer Sackett says the initial group was concerned that they wouldn't find enough women willing to pay the \$5,000 dues. "We've been stunned by the positive response," she says. The group is now made up of 60 women, roughly 20 of whom are MAC members.

The group receives ongoing updates from researchers, which keep the group plugged in and positive. The research allows the group's members to participate in advances that could change the face of health care. Flexer Sackett says the contributions from Circle of Giving are especially important in light of the dearth of gender-specific research and the lack of research money available in the current economy.

Members who want to share their philanthropic stories can email bbrant@themac.com. *WM*



Lori Flexer Sackett, left, and Dr. Michele Berlin, head of OHSU's Center for Women's Health, put their heads together to improve medical research specifically for women. Flexer Sackett is a founding member of a local Circle of Giving group that works closely with the Center for Women's Health.