

# IMPACT PLAYERS

## Women join forces to help other nonprofits

BY LAURA BOLLIN  
Pioneer Contributor

When three women got together two years ago with the idea of creating a nonprofit organization that donated to other nonprofit organizations, they had no idea of the impact it would create.

Today, Impact 100 Chicago, a Barrington-based nonprofit, has more than 120 members and has donated \$126,000 to local nonprofit organizations this year alone.

Marybeth Lernihan, Michele Polvere and Nonie Brown are the co-founders of the organization.

"I learned about the Impact 100 model through a good college friend of mine who is currently the president of the [organization] in Cincinnati, and she encouraged me to consider bringing the idea to Chicago," Lernihan said.

### Collective funding

The Cincinnati organization was created in 2001 by Wendy Steele. The organization awards grants in Ohio and northern Kentucky.

"We award grants to local nonprofit organizations," Lernihan said. "It is a great way to use the power of collective funding for the relatively smaller amount that each individual gives. Our funds pooled together provided substantial grants. Women have the opportunity to be educated about the work the nonprofits are doing in our community."

Peggy Gilbertsen, the communications chair for the organization, said it was all about working



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together.

"The premise of Impact 100 Chicago is for at least 100 women in the Chicagoland area to join as members, each making a tax-deductible donation of \$1,000," Gilbertsen said. "The funds are pooled to create a \$100,000 grant, which is awarded to a deserving nonprofit organization in the Chicagoland area."

### Hundreds of entries

This year \$100,000 went to Chicago Lights Urban Farm, one of five finalists. Members chose a finalist from hundreds of entries in five categories: environment, family, education, health and wellness, and arts and culture. Members heard 10-minute presentations from each of the finalists and voted on a winner.

"It is an urban farm in the Cabrini-Green area," Gilbertsen said of Urban Farm. "Residents are taught how to grow fruits and vegetables and how to live healthier lifestyles. They grow the fruits and vegetables, and then turn around and sell them to local restaurants, and they receive fresh produce at good prices. They have learned a lot to change their lives."

### New greenhouse

With the grant, Urban Farm

will be able to create a hard-shell greenhouse that will be erected this summer.

"They can now grow things year-round," Gilbertsen said. "They can have a meeting place for residents and be able to hold children's workshops. They can continue the urban farm concept year-round."

### Four more

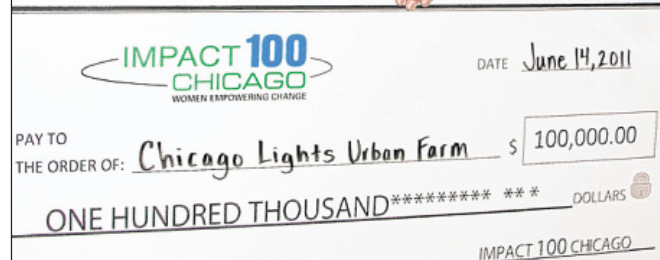
With the other \$26,000, Impact 100 Chicago donated \$6,500 each to the four other finalists to help fund daily operational expenses. The four other organizations that received grant money were: Almost Home Kids, the Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestra, the Daniel Murphy Scholarship Fund and the St. Martin de Porres House of Hope.

Gilbertsen and Lernihan both said their goal for 2011 is to help Impact 100 Chicago grow.

### Two grants

"We want to have 200 members, to be able to award two \$100,000 grants," Lernihan said. "Together, we will make really good decisions."

For more information about Impact 100 Chicago, call (888) 812-1711 or visit [impact100chicago.org](http://impact100chicago.org).



Daniel Murphy Scholarship Fund (top) receiving a \$6,500 grant award. Vicky Curtiss and Natasha Holbert (above), Urban Farm Program Director, with the \$100,000 grant award. | PEGGY GILBERTSEN PHOTOS



Impact 100 Chicago founders Nonie Brown, Michele Polvere, Marybeth Lernihan recruited donors from across the area — from Barrington to the North Shore.

## Highland Park woman joins cause of Impact 100 group

**Name:** Rita Galowich

**Occupation:** President and founder of Fund Inc. in Northbrook and consultant to nonprofit organizations

**Q. What made you interested in Impact 100?**

A. I think that the outcome of a gift of \$100,000 is truly transfor-

mational to the organization that receives it. I've spent my career helping nonprofits raise money. I really understand what \$100,000 can do.

**Q. How would you describe Impact 100 in one sentence?**

A. We are an organization with an unbelievably simple idea that makes a huge impact on nonprof-

its.

**Q. What is your goal for Impact 100 this year?**

A. Our goal is to raise \$200,000 so that we can give out two \$100,000 grants.

— Laura Bollin



Rita Galowich-