

## MEMORANDUM

TO: WGCA LEADERSHIP

FROM: NEIL NEWHOUSE B PUBLIC OPINION STRATEGIES

SUBJECT: WGCA POLL RESULTS

DATE: JUNE 18, 2006

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As you know, the WGCA recently conducted a survey of its members regarding attitudes toward the WGCA and its mission. An impressive 120 WGCA members responded to the survey. These were self-selected respondents, rather than a random sampling of members, and are therefore more likely to be more involved/engaged in the organization than the members at large.

The purpose of this memo is to review some key findings of the poll.

Key Points:

### ***WGCA'S MISSION***

WGCA members overwhelmingly agreed with all six of the initial statements offered, and did so with "strong agreement." For that reason, it's difficult to analyze the relatively narrow margins distinguishing responses to one statement from another.

The most highly agreed upon statement was agreed on by fully 98% of respondents, while the statement with the least consensus was agreed on by 88% of respondents. Even the range "strength of agreement" was narrow – ranging from 71% to 91%.

Nonetheless, the following are the highlights from this section of the poll:

WGCA members share enthusiasm for the mission of the organization in terms of "assuring success for Alexandria children" (91% strongly agree) and the need to be "informed when (they) invest in the community" (86% strongly agree).

There is also broad agreement from WGCA members on two statements that they "need flexible philanthropic options" (83% strongly agree).

WGCA members are less certain about their level of comfort with the Board making strategic and operational decisions for the organization (77% strong agree) and some remain unconvinced about the impact of large strategic grants versus more numerous smaller grants (71% strong agree).

### ***WGCA PARTICIPATION INTEREST***

A little over one-quarter of WGCA's membership want to be involved in the management and leadership of the organization. Fifty-three percent of the members responding to the survey say they have no interest in serving in the management and leadership of the organization, and just 4% say they are unsure whether they want to continue to be a member of WGCA.

There are two key points to consider here. First, the rate of attrition among members appears to be very low – just 4%. That should be very encouraging to the WGCA Board. Next, it's important to note that the

plurality of members (38%) could be described as “participators” – they want to participate in events and stay informed, but they have no desire to pursue a leadership position in the organization.

In the verbatim responses captured on this question, some members expressed a desire to become more involved in committees or the management of the group but signaled they had no idea how to make that happen.

“I would like to become more involved, but I am unsure as to just how or what committee to be involved with right now.”

### ***SATISFACTION WITH GIFT PROCESS***

Once the gift process is described to respondents, 73% say they are satisfied with their understanding of the process, and 79% say they are satisfied with the gift decision. Just 4% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with either one.

Interestingly, there appears to be more intensity of satisfaction with the gift decisions (63%) than with the gift process (50%).

Thirty-seven percent of members want to vote on the gift category and want to comment on pending gift decisions, while leaving the selection of the gift recipients to members who are most involved, while 36% prefer to comment on the pending gift decision, but leave the decision-making to the involved members.

This split in member attitudes reflects differing levels of preferred involvement by Members in the organization – all members don’t want to be involved in the minutiae of every gift decision, but many want the official opportunity to comment prior to final decisions being made.

Verbatim responses:

“I am concerned that we may be pulling funds away from the Campagna Center.”

“I really don’t know much about WGCA, but the conclusion I have come to is we give money, but don’t ‘do’ anything.”

“I appreciate that I feel as if I have a standing invitation to take on a greater leadership role in WGCA, but I still don’t feel I fully understand the process. How do organizations apply for a grant? How are the proposals developed? What criteria are used to make a recommendation to the Board?”

### ***WGCA EVENTS***

Respondents were asked if they would be more likely to attend WGCA events under a variety of different circumstances.

Evening events (44% more likely – 14% less likely) clearly win out over daytime events (27% more likely – 33% less likely).

Educational events (31% - 1%) have a significant edge over social events.

WGCA members also prefer that events be interactive (31%-3%) and in their own neighborhoods (37%-0%).

### ***WGCA MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS***

Just 5% of respondents note that they don’t feel the need for WGCA to keep them informed about community needs and programs – indicative of the high level of interest among members regarding the community.

Half of the members polled believe that WGCA can best meet their needs through written material sent by e-mail, while 30% believe that educational forums and events provide the best way to meet their information needs.

One-quarter of respondents (26%) say they are “much more informed” about issues and initiatives facing Alexandria’s children as a result of WGCA, with another 47% saying they are “somewhat more informed.” Fully 22% say they are not more informed since becoming a member of the organization.

Readership of WGCA newsletters and emails is high – fully 80% of respondents say they either skim most or read most of the communications they receive from WGCA.

Not a single respondent said they receive the electronic communications but do not read them.

WGCA members generally rate the communications they receive very positively for their “timeliness” (50% excellent), “presentation (52% excellent) and “content” (50% excellent), rating only the “frequency” of the communications significantly lower (38% excellent). (There was no indication as to whether this response indicates too much frequency of communications, or too little.)

When members were asked what information they would find most valuable to receive, the areas most frequently selected had to do with “issues and initiatives involving Alexandria’s children” and “previous gift results and future gift plans.” One member suggested “measured results” of the grants and another suggested sending an “annual report.”

#### ***WGCA FUTURE ENDEAVORS***

Clearly, there seems to be enthusiasm among WGCA members for extending their commitment to WGCA through a community service commitment. Fully 40% of members say they would be interested in participating in a WGCA Community Service Day, with another 22% expressing interest in participating in WGCA sponsored group projects.

(Again, just 6% of those polled say they would probably not participate in WGCA sponsored community service programs.)

#### ***WGCA-INSPIRED PHILANTHROPY***

Membership in WGCA has had no measurable impact on member’s commitment to other charitable giving in Alexandria. Fully 78% of members say they gave the same as usual to other Alexandria non-profits.

#### ***SATISFACTION WITH WGCA***

Fully 61% of members say they are “very satisfied” with WGCA as an organization, with another 15% being “somewhat satisfied.” Just 3% expressed “soft” dissatisfaction with WGCA.

That satisfaction is apparent in comments offered by members:

It is a very professional, focused group that does what it says in a positive and impressive manner.

It is a great group of women who truly want to make a difference in Alexandria and I am looking forward to making a real commitment here.

All members are valued, regardless of the amount of money they may contribute to WGCA.

There is a communicated sense, a feeling, that says we truly do care. This is not just another organization we sign our names to, it is one that a true passion is felt and thus far communicated consistently.

WGCA gives women the opportunity to pool their resources for the benefit of the community. It is very well managed by a very committed, dynamic, smart group of women and has made a difference in the short time it has been in existence. What it has accomplished is truly impressive.

I am a new member and have not been that involved yet, however, the professionalism, enthusiasm, integrity and intelligence are obvious and appreciated. It makes this organization worth my time.

This organization provides a means of empowering women as financial decision-makers working together to make a difference in our community. I am very pleased to be a part of it.

Very impressed with Karen and the organization. Everything has been very professional. I feel happy to be a part of a group of women making a difference for other women and children in Alexandria.

I'm a very new member, but it strikes me as an organization with its act together, doing things based only on generosity.

At the same time though, members also offer criticism and suggestions for how to improve WGCA. There are a couple of themes running through these comments – these members tend to view the leadership of WGCA as an elite few who make decisions for the entire organization, they believe a community service component is needed so that some can contribute in ways other than financial contributions.

Don't feel like there's a level of involvement between just showing up at meetings once a year, and having it be a major commitment.

A small number are very involved, the rest are left to attend events where the select few are engaged and part of the decisions.

Great gifts given, but not enough participation by the members. A few decide for all.

I have only been to one "member recruiting" event. But the presentation that was made did not make me feel I would be part of or included as an equal member of the group. I would prefer to be involved in efforts to raise awareness and funds – but that seems to be a closely held activity for a select few.

I would like to see more hands-on work and volunteer activities. It is easy to donate money. Yet even though that's an important component, it is more important to donate your time.

I really believe in this Giving Circle, but it seems that it is becoming an "exclusive" groups rather than "inclusive." Retreats are held on work days, people in the community are discouraged from active participation with the impression that all the group wants is a check.

There are many people who do not necessarily have large financial means, but do have time and energy. The group is not ethnically diverse and I have not seen efforts to improve this. It is frustrating to think that people who can invest energy and efforts are walking away frustrated because they feel left out. The community needs more than financial input – we could make a difference in many more ways.

As I said, I don't really know the purpose, other than to give money.

I would like to see the community service component expanded to provide more opportunities to contribute other than just financial.

### **WGCA OVERHEAD**

Fully 78% of members say they would be willing to use a small percentage of available funds for operational expenses.

**BOTTOM LINE**

There is a great deal of satisfaction with WGCA. Members are pleased that the organization was formed, they understand and embrace the purpose of the group, and they generally think it is very well run. Further, few have any complaints about the communications process or the information imparted to members.

The suggestions for improvement fall into one of two categories:

1. Encourage/Invite participation in the gift –giving process to all members. Consider a membership vote on the gift category (e.g. parental engagement, middle school programs, gang prevention, etc) for the gift committee to pursue. Communicate the fact that all members are welcome to participate in the gift committee as well as all committees.
2. Expand the activities of the WGCA to include a community service component that allows more women to get involved and deepens the commitment of those already committed.