

Jewish Healthcare Foundation spearheading women's health care initiative

Jun 23, 2017, 1:09pm EDT

Lydia Nuzum, Reporter, Pittsburgh Business Times

The Jewish Healthcare Foundation (JHF) will give \$10,000 to the best pitch to improve women's health during a regional launch Monday evening of the Women's Health Activist Movement Global initiative, an organization looking to create a more formal network to improve the lives of women in the health care industry.

"This is our local launch and, we hope, will set the model for cities around the country," said Karen Feinstein, president and CEO of the JHF. "In a nutshell, the organization is women leaders in health care representing every level on the spectrum of leadership. Two major concerns that brought us together were that we felt that the health care system, as it exists, is failing both its workers and patients, and that as women, we were being somewhat diminished in leadership ranks in a system where we make up 70 percent of the workforce."

Feinstein, a member of Women of Impact nationally, said the organization launched roughly four years ago and is currently made up of 30 women from every level of leadership in organizations that range from the Department of Veterans Affairs to the American Academy of Pediatrics.

"Our feeling is that we're not being treated equitably," she said. "We all work within systems we feel have a long way to go in terms of being excellent in performance, but also in being excellent in how they regard their women leaders."

On Monday, the JHF will kick off a WHAM regional initiative with an awards ceremony for women's health activists in Pittsburgh and a "Big Idea Challenge," with local nonprofits pitching their plans to improve women's health in western Pennsylvania for a chance to win a \$10,000 award. Eight finalists will present their pitches to a panel of nine judges who, in conjunction with the audience, will vote on the top proposal, Feinstein said.



Karen Wolk Feinstein, PhD, Co-founder of WHAMGlobal and President/CEO of the Jewish Healthcare Foundation

"Until now, we were an informal group of women who would meet (in Washington, D.C.) to talk about our concerns. Then we said 'we should do something,'" Feinstein said. "We needed to formalize the fact we wanted to create a much-expanded network of women committed to bringing about change."

WHAMGlobal formed last year, Feinstein said, adding she hopes JHF's Monday event, which will be held at the August Wilson Center and has attracted around 200 attendees, will be a launching point for building the organization in Pittsburgh.

"In some ways all health care is local, but health care activism in particular begins in local communities, so I wanted Pittsburgh to be the city that set the tone and be the pacesetter for the rest of the nation," she said.

Eight organizations, including Allegheny Health Network Women's Health Programs; Bethlehem Haven; the FISA Foundation; Gateway Rehab; Latino Community Center; Magee Women's Research Institute; the University of Pittsburgh Center for Women's Health Research and Innovation; and the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development, will present pitches during the event. Attendees will be able to vote for their favorite pitch, and the winner will also receive continued support from the WHAM network.

Lydia Nuzum covers health care, technology and education for the Pittsburgh Business Times.