



# LOIS BUNTZ: HELPING WOMEN MAKE AN IMPACT

By Mary Lambkin, UWRA Volunteer

**Lois Buntz, former CEO of United Way of East Central Iowa (UWECI), recently retired but is staying busy through consulting and volunteer work. Her upcoming book on women and philanthropy explores the new and different ways women participate in philanthropic giving.**

**UWRA: You've worked in nonprofit administration, education, and fundraising for over 40 years—all valuable experiences that you're using to inform your upcoming book. How did you get here?**

I was trained as a psychotherapist/social worker and transitioned into administrative positions after five years of direct service work. In between agency work, I taught social work at a liberal arts college and served as an adjunct professor at the University of Iowa Graduate School. Returning to nonprofit administration, I became CEO of a family service agency and learned the art of fundraising. Eventually, I joined United Way and served for twelve years as the CEO of United Way of East Central Iowa (UWECI). After retirement, I started a consulting service and now work with United Ways on major gifts and women's philanthropy programs. I am also writing a book on women's philanthropy.

**What are some of the highlights of your career with United Way?**

There are many, but I'll mention two.

During my United Way career, our community experienced a horrific flood that demolished our downtown and more than 5,000 homes. Our United Way led the charge to build a 14 million-dollar human services campus to house 13 nonprofit agencies, including UWECI.

I am also extremely proud of the Women's Leadership Initiative (Women United) program we developed in 2006, which is still growing. As the first and only woman CEO of United Way of East Central Iowa, I am truly proud of all the women who served with me and will continue the great tradition of women giving to women.

**How have you seen the philanthropy world change in the past two decades?**

Donors are more informed about the causes they support and want a direct link to the issues. They have so many more choices. Fundraisers have to spend more time stewarding them.

There are also generational differences in giving. For example, younger donors are more likely to be influenced by peers and social media.

Philanthropy has always been a relationship business, but now donors can have relationships in so many new ways, personally and virtually.

**Your upcoming book focuses on women's philanthropy. What makes this type of giving unique?**

Thanks to the wonderful research conducted at the Women's Philanthropy Institute at Indiana University, we now know more about how women think about philanthropy and how it influences their decisions. Women approach philanthropy differently. They like to get engaged in the cause, network, create solutions, and work in collaboration with others. Philanthropy is more than a transaction for women — it's truly an investment. Women define philanthropy much more broadly than just money. Women have had to learn how to be philanthropic in different ways because they haven't always had access to money.

**What are some of the topics you're exploring in your upcoming book?**

1. The projected increase in women's wealth and philanthropy
2. Women's motivations for giving
3. How philanthropy impacts programs for women and girls
4. The impact of women's increased philanthropic efforts

**What advice would you give to women philanthropists looking to make an impact through giving?**

First, think about what values are important to you and how those could translate into giving. Second, learn as much as you can about your financial situation. What assets do you have and what are your options for giving? Third, think about what causes you want to impact and the level of impact you want to make. Small or large, short-term or long-term? Do you want to touch many different causes through multiple efforts or be more strategic and make fewer and perhaps larger gifts? Study the issues and learn about them, ask for metrics and outcomes, and then follow up to make sure your investment is creating change.

**Now that you are retired, how has your purpose changed?**

Retirement has allowed me to be more focused in my professional endeavors and enjoy some activities I didn't have time for when I was working full time. My husband and I love to travel domestically and internationally. We bicycle, golf, and enjoy cooking. I am also a master gardener and participate in my local garden club.

I still enjoy consulting. I have been putting my administrative and fundraising skills to work serving on three nonprofit Boards.

And then there's my book on women and philanthropy, which has been a labor of love. I have been interviewing women donors across the US and it has been fascinating. But writing is very hard work.

Best of all, I can take time off to spend time with our children and grandchildren.

**How can UWRA members reach you?**

I'd love to connect. You can email me at [lb@LoisBuntzConsultingLLC.com](mailto:lb@LoisBuntzConsultingLLC.com).